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*FOR IGNInsiders

FFX REVIEW

ITS FINALLY HERE AND WE'VE
GOT THE REVIEW YOU'VE
BEEN WAITING FOR

FINAL FANTASY X
ファイナルファンタジーX

Snowball™

:: ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

:: Winter's Coolest Flicks :: Smashing Drive GCN
:: Tony Hawk 2x Mini-Guide :: Hitman 2 PC
:: Inside Britney Spears :: Holiday Gear Guide

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Letter from the Editor ::

This is the season we've all been waiting for. The time of year where everyone is cheery and filled with holiday glee -- that is unless you're standing in line with 20 other people waiting to pick up that last GameCube or Xbox.

The great thing about this time of year is that, with all the new game and movie releases, you always have something to do. Gamers are busy with Pikmin, Halo, GTA3, Super Smash Brothers: Melee, THPS3, DOA3, Return to Castle Wolfenstein...the list goes on and on. Movie fans aren't entertainment-starved, either. Rush Hour 2 just came out on DVD, and Moulin Rogue should be out soon. And I bet there's not one of you out there who's not stoked to see Lord of the Rings.

Of course, the hardest part of this time of the year is whittling down your wish list to a few hundred "must have" items. As for me, I'm holding out for old Uncle Pennybags to send me on one of those "grab all you can in five minutes" shopping sprees, but I guess I'll have to be happy playing with my Xbox and GameCube until then.

Happy Holidays!

– Tal Blevins

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EMAIL OF THE MONTH ::

IGn editor... My uncle is high up in nintendo of america and he knows a lot of the secrets about gamecube. i can't tell you his name, because he would be fired for telling me the top secret information. first of all, i know that the new zelda game is actually going to look like a normal zelda game (the cartoon stuff is just a trick by nintendo for hype). also, he told me that xbox has sold only half of gamecubes numbers, so probably Xbox will have to do what sega did and only make software again. this information is secret, so if you print it can you send me a free gamecube? *- dave in canada*

GameCube ::
Swooning for Moon

Hi! I am a huge, HUGE fan of the Harvest Moon series. I was just wondering if Natsume is planning on bringing the series to the GameCube?
-- **Robert Trevino**

Fran responds: It just so happens that Harvest Moon is indeed headed to GameCube. Unfortunately we have no word on when it is planned for release. When we know more, you will too.

Polish Your Cube

I was just wondering if there were any recommended ways to clean the GameCube discs. I assume a CD cleaner will work fine, but I figured I better ask the experts first.
-- **Justin White**

Fran responds: I wouldn't call us expert disc cleaners, but GameCube optical discs can be cleaned just as you would clean DVDs or CDs. Personally I'd spring for one of those twirl-ma-jig cleaners you can buy at the music stores.

Xbox ::
Dizzy Spell

I haven't played Dead or Alive, so maybe they have this...but when you do a certain move, for instance say you jump up and are about to kick the opponent in the neck...and it is already unavoidable...what about if the camera paused the action and zoomed around and resumed the action (like Trinity in The Matrix beginning scene). Just an idea, but it could involve not just fighting games. I saw it in a TransWorld Surf preview trailer. This makes the game look much more cinematic and is an easier thing to implement than in film (characters already 3D). Thanks. Keep up the good work.
-- **Blake**

Vincent responds: You haven't seen Max Payne on the PC, have you? The spin effect has been dancing around the periphery of games for a while now, but believe me, you'll be getting your in-game spins in games like Max Payne real soon. It's going to be the sun flare of 2002, guaranteed. Even bigger than cel shading, if that's possible... even this letter is cel-shaded black for a cooler effect.

Connection Conundrum

I'm currently a college student, and I was thinking about purchasing the Xbox. I was wondering about the connection. Is it possible to hook an Xbox up to the network the campus is on or is it just for DSL?
-- **Kblatt**

Vincent responds: The Ethernet connection is for broadband gaming next year... but it's also for network gaming between you and your friends. You've actually got the most perfect situation out there, because all you have to do is plug your Xbox into your Ethernet, and it'll find any other Xbox systems on the network. As long as you're on the same network you won't have to do anything besides simply plugging in your systems, so harass three other dorm mates into getting systems, and you'll be able to do a four system, 16 player game of Halo, you lucky punk, you.

FilmForce ::
Berry, Halle Berry.

Brian, I've heard rumors that Halle Berry is in talks for Bond 20. Do you know anything about this?
-- **Fred**

*Linder responds: Yes, it seems that the latest Bond-girl news has a bit more credibility than previous rumors, since it originated in reputable industry magazine **Variety** and not some British tabloid. Halle Berry is indeed the subject of the report, and they say she's in negotiations to star in the film. Over the past year we've seen dozens of rumors doused by **Bond** producers, but the timing and the source for this one make it seem legit.*

*Also, it's important to note that she's simply in "negotiations," and until she's signed nothing is set in stone. Expect an official casting announcement soon, since shooting on **Bond 20** is scheduled to begin on January 14th at Pinewood Studios in London (in fact, by the time you read this, the announcement may have already been made).*

Psycho Alice in Twisted Wonderland

What's the word with the movie based on the "Alice" game? Is it ever going to happen? I heard John August was writing the script. The game ▶

totally kicks, and I wanna see the movie!

– Dave M.

Linder responds: The movie based on the popular game, "American McGee's Alice," is still tentatively scheduled for a 2003 release. The project is currently in development with horror director Wes Craven (Scream, Nightmare on Elm Street) attached. Screenwriter John August (Charlie's Angels, Go) turned in a 20-page treatment for the film, but sources tell IGN FilmForce that brothers Erich and Jon Hoeber (Montana) are actually writing the screenplay.

DVD ::
Bart Messing With Your Xbox?

Well, I picked up my XBox on launch day and was lucky enough to get one of the six DVD playback kits Blockbuster had that day. I also grabbed The Simpsons Season One set. Anywho, all the episodes seem to be super jerky. The animation flows about as smoothly as chunky peanutbutter. The audio is fine, but the episodes are almost unwatchable. I was wondering if this was an XBox problem or if the discs are just crap. Any help would be great. Thanks.

– Rick

Jeremy responds: Unfortunately a large number of The Simpsons Season One boxed sets were shipped with some problems. Here at IGN we had a couple bad copies of the set. The problems can range from the stuttering that you describe to complete lock-ups of the discs.

Most stores should have fixed copies in by now, so you should be able to exchange the set for a new one.

PS2 ::
Blood Omen – When?

I'm writing to get some clarification on the release date of Blood Omen 2 (PS2 version, of course). Eidos says

Spring 2002. EBgames.com says February 1st, 2002. You guys said December in your release date calendar. I've heard November 30th from some other people. So what's the real date, if there is one?

– Joel G.

David Smith responds: This is one of those situations where it's best to believe the most conservative date. If Eidos says next spring, that's probably the one to bank on, especially since Crystal Dynamics is known to have a little difficulty with the old deadline crunch.

PC ::
Where'd That Darned King Get to Now?

Whatever happened to Sierra's King's Quest series? That was the best adventure game series ever made and contained some of the best adventure games ever made. The first six were all great games, and seven was all right, although they made it a little too cartoony and a whole lot easier than the earlier ones. Then they got the bright idea to make Mask of Eternity, which dropped the continuing story line of the royal family from the first seven and also became more of a Tomb Raider game rather than classic King's Quest. I know Sierra's been having some problems recently, and maybe bringing back King's Quest is just what they need. LucasArts has proved that adventure games can still be successful, and I hope Sierra is considering making a new King's Quest that returns to the classic style of the first six.

– Edleglide

Dan responds: Well I gotta say I agree with you. The art of adventure gaming seems to have been lost with the exception of a few key games like The Longest Journey and Escape from Monkey Island. It seems like all we do nowadays is shoot things with oversized guns. But unfortunately for you and me, we haven't heard of any

new King's Quest games in the works, and I am very doubtful that we ever will. But you never know, companies do get the urge to revisit old friends every now and again. Keep hope alive.

Handhelds ::
Uncle Pennybags

I was wondering what opinion you folks at IGN have of the portablemonopoly.com project. It seems like a great product, but as with everything great, I'm a bit skeptical. Will you let the masses know your opinion of it, or give a review of it if you get your hands on one? Thanks in advance.

– Dustin Purtee

Craig responds: In case you haven't been following it, Portable Monopoly's project is a self-contained front-lighting project a Game Boy Advance fan created for his own personal GBA system. According to the site he created, this guy has already built a prototype of a lighting unit that can be installed inside the system that will cast an even glow of light over the LCD screen, drawing very little amounts of power from the system's two AA batteries. Now, I'm all about people taking the initiative and creating new ways to light the LCD because, quite frankly, it's really tough to find a perfect light source to see the screen. My problem with the Portable Monopoly project is that it is, so far, vaporware. The creator of the prototype continues to promise a kit that he'll sell on his site, but so far, after several months, nothing's come out of it...and it's unknown if anything will come out of it. I'll give the kid credit; he's getting practice in hype...perfect for a career in PR.

DECEMBER 2001

release DATES

We've Got Your Back

Pissed off because you didn't get to the store in time to grab the latest version of Crash Buttsicoot or IGN Arena? Fear not! Just head over to the IGN GameStore and pick up a copy now!

PC Games ::

TITLE	GENRE	PUBLISHER	DATE
FS2002 Platinum Plane Pack	simulation	Abacus	12/03
FS Sky Ranch	simulation	Abacus	12/03
EverQuest: Shadows of Luclin	online	Verant	12/03
Cubix: Robots for Everyone	puzzle	3DO	12/03
911: Paramedic	adventure	Sierra	12/04
Operation Flashpoint: Red Hammer	action	Codemasters	12/04
Dune	adventure	Dreamcatcher	12/04
Demon World: Dark Armies	strategy	Xicat	12/04
Sniper	action	Xicat	12/04
Sea-Monkeys	simulation	Xicat	12/04
Screamer 4x4	racing	Titus	12/05
Codename: Outbreak	action	Microids	12/05
Original War	strategy	Virgin	12/05
Elite Forces	action	Xicat	12/05
Persian Wars	strategy	Dreamcatcher	12/07
Master Rallye	racing	Microids	12/07
Rally Trophy	racing	MacMillan	12/07
Casino Tycoon	strategy	Dreamcatcher	12/10
Panzer Elite Gold	simulation	JoWood	12/10
Car Tycoon	strategy	Fishtak	12/10
Capitalism II	strategy	Ubi Soft	12/11
Evil Twin	platform	Ubi Soft	12/11
Train Sim Modeler	simulation	Abacus	12/14
Darkened Skye	action	Simon & Schuster	12/17
Bumper Wars	action	Simon & Schuster	12/17
Grandia II	RPG	Ubi Soft	12/18
Destroyer Command	simulation	Ubi Soft/SSI	12/18
Industry Giant 2	strategy	Simon & Schuster	12/31

PlayStation 2 ::

TITLE	GENRE	PUBLISHER	DATE
Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force	action	Majesco	12/03
Tetris Worlds	puzzle	THQ	12/03
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	adventure	Interplay	12/03
NFL GameDay 2002	sports	989 Sports	12/04
Namco Museum	action	Namco	12/04
Jonny Mosely Mad Trix	sports	3DO	12/04
Jak & Daxter	adventure	SCEA	12/04

PlayStation 2 (cont.) ::

TITLE	GENRE	PUBLISHER	DATE
Legend of Alon D'ar	RPG	Ubi Soft	12/05
Max Payne	action	Rockstar Games	12/11
Wizardry: Tale of the Forsaken Land	RPG	Atlus	12/16
Shadow Hearts	RPG	Midway	12/18
Grandia II	RPG	Ubi Soft	12/18
Hidden Invasion	action	Conspiracy	12/18
Jade Cocoon 2	RPG	Ubi Soft	12/18
Final Fantasy X	RPG	Square EA	12/26
NFL Blitz 2002	sports	Midway	12/28

Game Boy Advance ::

Driven	racing	BAM Entertainment	12/04
Planet of the Apes	adventure	Ubi Soft	12/05
Army Men Operation Green	adventure	3DO	12/06
American Bass Challenge	sports	Ubi Soft	12/06
ET	adventure	Newkidco	12/06
Prehistorik Man	platformer	Titus	12/11
Kao the Kangaroo	platformer	Titus	12/11
Planet Monsters	action	Titus	12/11
Breath of Fire	RPG	Capcom	12/12
Mortal Kombat Advance	fighting	Midway	12/13
Jonny Moseley Mad Trix	sports	3DO	12/16
Smuggler's Run	action	Destination Software	12/16
Flintstones: Big Trouble	action	Conspiracy Entertainment	12/20
Phalanx	action	Kemco	12/20
Mech Platoon	RTS	Kemco	12/20

GameCube ::

Pikmin	strategy	Nintendo	12/03
Super Smash Bros. Melee	fighting	Nintendo	12/03
Cel Damage	racing	Electronic Arts	12/19
NFL Quarterback Club 2002	sports	Acclaim	12/19
The Simpsons Road Rage	action	Electronic Arts	12/19

Xbox ::

The Simpsons Road Rage	action	EA	12/04
MX 2002 Featuring Ricky Carmichael	sports	THQ	12/05
NHL 2002	sports	EA	12/06
Batman Vengeance	action	Ubi Soft	12/11
Max Payne	action	Rockstar Games	12/11
UFC: Tapout	sports	Crave Entertainment	12/18
Star Wars: Obi-Wan	action	LucasArts	12/18
SSX Tricky	sports	Electronic Arts	12/18
WWF Raw	sports	THQ	12/26
Blood Wake	action	Microsoft	12/26
NightCaster	action/adventure	Microsoft	12/26

In Theaters ::

TITLE	STUDIO	DIRECTOR	DATE
Ocean's Eleven	WB	Steven Soderbergh	12/07
State Property	Lions Gate	Abdul Malik Abbott	12/07
Not Another Teen Movie	Sony	Joel Gallen	12/14

unplugged :: release dates

In Theaters (cont.) ::

TITLE	STUDIO	DIRECTOR	DATE
The Royal Tenenbaums	Buena Vista	Wes Anderson	12/14
Vanilla Sky	Paramount	Cameron Crowe	12/14
The Fellowship of the Ring	New Line	Peter Jackson	12/19
Gangs of New York	Miramax	Martin Scorsese	12/21
How High	Universal	Jesse Dylan	12/21
Jimmy Neutron: Boy Genius	Paramount	John Davis	12/21
Joe Somebody	Fox	John Pasquin	12/21
Kate and Leopold	Miramax	James Mangold	12/21
The Majestic	WB	Frank Darabont	12/21
Ali	Sony	Michael Mann	12/25
Impostor	Miramax	Gary Fleder	12/25

DVD ::

(NOTE: SE = Special Edition,   UE = Ultimate Edition,   CC = Criterion Collection)

TITLE	RATING	DIRECTOR	DATE
Almost Famous Untitles: The Bootleg Cut	R	Cameron Crowe	12/04
American Outlaws	PG-13	Les Mayfield	12/04
Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure	PG	Stephen Herek	12/04
Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey	PG	Peter Hewitt	12/04
Dirty Rotten Scoundrels	PG	Frank Oz	12/04
Pearl Harbor	PG-13	Michael Bay	12/04
Summer Catch	PG-13	Mike Tollin	12/04
Casualties of War	R	Brian De Palma	12/11
Hedwig and the Angry Inch	R	John Cameron Mitchell	12/11
Jurassic Park 3	PG-13	Joe Johnston	12/11
Rush Hour 2 Infinifilm	PG-13	Brett Ratner	12/11
Thee Score	R	Frank Oz	12/11
Moulin Rouge	PG-13	Baz Luhrmann	12/18
The Princess Diaries	G	Garry Marshall	12/18
Scary Movie 2	R	Keenan Ivory Wayans	12/18
Twin Peaks: The First Season	Not Rated	Multi	12/18
War of the Roses	R	Danny DeVito	12/18
Evolution	PG-13	Ivan Reitman	12/26

December is a Busy Month for IGN Birthdays! ::

TITLE	DATE	AGE
Matt Casamassina (IGN Cube)	December 22	26
Jeremy Conrad (IGN DVD)	December 23	24
Mark Fujita (IGN intern)	December 28	25
Tal Blevins (Editorial Manager)	December 28	29
Doug Perry (IGN PS2)	December 28	36
Aaron Boulding (IGN Xbox)	December 30	29

FINAL FANTASY X

ファイナルファンタジー X

BOTH AN END AND A BEGINNING FOR
THE **FINAL FANTASY** SERIES
THIS ALSO HAPPENS TO BE ONE OF
THE BEST TO BEAR THE NAME.

BY DAVID SMITH

PUBLISHER: SQUARE EA
DEVELOPER: SQUARE
PLAYERS: 1
GENRE: RPG
RELEASE DATE: DECEMBER 26, 2001

10 Final Fantasy games.

This is a pretty big event. Gamers have grown used to a new FF coming out like clockwork on a nearly yearly basis nowadays, and that regularity, in addition to the fact that every game is a new creation, perhaps obscures the magnitude of the entire endeavor over its history. Sit back and think about the amount of effort that's gone into Final Fantasy over the years, however many it's been, and the amout of game that's come out of it. When you think about it, in terms of the amount of product involved, it's one of the biggest franchises in the history of entertainment.

This is perhaps the time to sit back and appreciate the series, because Final Fantasy X marks its biggest turning point. Final Fantasy VII meant the leap to 3D, and an unprecedented step forward in the games' cinematic presentation, but FFX is essentially the last Final Fantasy as we have known it. After this, we have the strange new world of online adventuring, and then Yasumi Matsuno's takeover of the executive-production reins. Not that these aren't interesting new worlds to explore, but change on that scale is always a little unsettling.

What is heartening, though, is that the last of Hironobu Sakaguchi's Final Fantasy games makes a very strong argument for being the best game the series has ever seen. It is, as the series has always been, a graphical showcase of the first order. The addition of spoken dialogue, despite plenty of second-guessing before the event, has succeeded to a far greater degree than a first effort of this sort has any right to. Most of all, though, this game is more fun to simply play than any Final Fantasy in memory. A huge

reworking of the character development scheme has hit the jackpot as far as mixing customization and character individuality, and one simple tweak to the battle system has pulled almost every aspect of gameplay through a great leap forward.

Aside from being such a finely made game, it's also a remarkable stylistic departure in a great many areas. Tetsuya Nomura has put forth some of his best work in the area of character design for this cast. The world, like that of most FFs, is a motley collection of different regions, but there's a greater feeling of cohesion in comparison to VII or IX, and a revival of some of VIII's prettiest design elements. Most notably, two more composers aside from Nobuo Uematsu worked on the soundtrack, and it definitely shows, with some tracks that will leave you wondering how they wound up in a Final Fantasy game. But there's nothing wrong with doing something different, as long as it's done well, and Final Fantasy X is certainly done well, in almost every area.

It is, like all the rest of its fellows, a Heroic Quest. It is, however, probably the first Quest whose Hero is a time-lost 3D full-contact water-polo player. Again, it's something different. FFX manages to create a remarkably engaging cast, though, despite the fact that Nomura has well and truly topped himself in the outlandish accessorization department. Fashion in the world of Spira seems to consist of building up a strong base of weird stuff, followed by festooning it with as many little bits of weird stuff as you can manage on top of that -- favorite bits would be the long blue ribbons hanging from the back of Rikku's shirt, and naturally Lulu's amazing floor-length skirt.

Amidst the most colorful of the recent FFs is an unusually somber story, though, brought into sharp relief by the spoken dialogue. Square hasn't changed the way it tells a story with this, but it can't help but change the way

we interpret the dialogue -- emotional and factual content is both conveyed and processed differently when we hear it, rather than simply read it. Reading a book, watching a subtitled movie, or playing a traditional text-driven RPG generally presents a softer impact, for good or ill, than hearing the same dialogue spoken and acted in front of you. Thus, it's a potentially dangerous step, since poor dialogue spoken hurts much worse than poor dialogue read.

This isn't a perfect piece of acting and direction, especially due to Square's comparative inexperience with realtime cinematics, but as mentioned above, the experiment works far better than you'd expect a first effort to. The English version of Final Fantasy X has the same top-notch text translation as Square's later PlayStation RPGs, and the only faults in the voice acting, oddly enough, come from the lead characters. Even those, too, are largely just fine -- it's just inevitable that roles with that many more lines and that many more moments of emotional intensity would have more moments that ring a bit harshly in the ear. Tidus, in particular, has a tendency to speak a little too high and a little too fast when he gets excited.

The supporting cast is rock-solid, though. Auron is engagingly grim behind the high collar and glasses, while Lulu plays his counterpart on the distaff side, with a cool demeanor and a very fun sense of irony. Rikku provides the chirpy comic relief without grating too badly (as her Japanese voice actor did at times), and Wakka, wader-clad goofball though he may be, is probably the best-cast and best-acted of the lot. He has an accent that's hard to place -- the best description we can manage would be half Jamaica, have East LA -- but it's perfectly

consistent, and complements the character to a T.

What brings down the acting at times is the half of it you don't hear. Though it's been making cinematic games for years, this is actually just Square's second game to feature the heavy use of completely in-engine cutscenes (the first being Vagrant Story), and the animators haven't quite caught up to the standard as far as body language. The problem is dead obvious after playing Metal Gear Solid 2, which is as near to perfection as possible when it comes to animating physical acting in 3D. In comparison, Final Fantasy X's cast still moves like the last generation of game characters, with a lot of exaggerated gestures, repetitive movements, stiff transitions, and extremely questionable lip-synching. The 3D engine is also overtaxed on a few occasions, so you get some jittery motions that break the mood. The lip-synching issue is easily forgivable after enough time, but the contrast between the dialogue and the accompanying body English is often very jarring, since the former has upped the ante so much higher in comparison.

That's more the fault of inexperience rather than lack of talent on the part of the artists, though, and it's a small down note struck by what is otherwise a beautiful thing to look at. One feels rather silly trotting out the same exclamations every time a new Final Fantasy raises the visual bar, but there's no two ways around it -- Square knows how to make a pretty game. MGS2 showed a greater degree of visual refinement, but its setting seemed to confine it to shades of gray and brown most of the time. Not so Final Fantasy, whose artists have carte blanche to throw every color imaginable at the screen, and a wonderful 3D engine with which to do it.

Where civilization intrudes, the look is reminiscent of FFIX's riot of activity married to FFVIII's elegant detail. Designs like the new airship and the city of Zanarkand especially echo FFVIII, with lots of interlocking circles and flowing script-like details. Outside the cities, there's much of Chrono Cross' tropical feel, in the smaller islands and villages of Spira (perhaps a consequence of the Okinawan influence said to find its way into the world design). Work forward, and things go all cold and mountainous a la FFVII, but in every case, color stands out more than anything else. The game's lines are closer to FFVIII than anything else, particularly since the characters are back to ordinary proportion, but the palette couldn't be more different. Just compare the male leads -- you've got Squall, with his black leather and permanent mope, standing opposite Tidus, who's got a yellow jacket, a shimmering blue sword, and an indelible grin.

Mind you, the game isn't garish -- just colorful. Which is a perfectly sensible decision, now that there's that much more texture-moving power to go around. Make that just plain power, actually, since FFX's graphics engine improves on its predecessors in every area possible. It doesn't completely kick the pre-rendered backgrounds of the PlayStation games, but then there's no reason to discard them where it wouldn't be necessary. Where it couldn't hurt to throw in a little more opulent detail, as in towns and other calm areas, static backgrounds are used. Dungeons and field exploration areas are almost all drawn in 3D, though, and in a way that definitely takes advantage of the realtime environment. Tunnels and mountain paths now criscross around and across each other, stretching up and out in all dimensions. All that extra space is filled with atmospheric effects, like mist, flame, or multicolored will-o'-the-wisps, floating around off in the distance.

When it comes to the friends and fiends that fill the world, it's a little harder to judge the quality of the modeling, since there isn't much in the way of competition to hold them up against. Metal Gear certainly looks better in this area, but that's hardly a fair comparison. Judging from some of what we've seen of the 2002 RPG crop, though, FFX may remain the standard -- become the standard, actually. The character animation fails sometimes when it has to match up with the new demands of the spoken dialogue, but in the wordless combat sequences, the fireworks are as impressive as ever.

Is it really worth bothering to mention that the summon animations are amazing? You've seen them before, you already know how good they'll look. You know the bestiary is filled with dozens of gorgeous realtime monsters, from towering bosses down to tiny bouncing Sabotenders. You know the spell effects are beautiful, you know the character animations are excellent (wait for the underwater battles -- even ordinary attacks are impressive). Imagine the PlayStation games, and add exponents, multiplying speed, resolution, and modeling detail. The form has not changed substantially, but what fills it is much different.

Fans of the series most certainly won't be disappointed by what they have to see. What they hear, however, is a potentially different situation. The invariable furore over the English dialogue is a different matter entirely -- we await with snickers in readiness for plenty of high-pitched whinging on that score. What should be a much more interesting debate is the reaction to FFX's soundtrack, which is definitely something different in comparison to the past games.

A change was inevitable, since Nobuo Uematsu is now just one of three composers receiving credit. The others, Junya Nakano and Masashi Hamauzu (of Threads of Fate and SaGa Frontier, respectively) throw in plenty of their own chops, and the result is...something new. The orchestral and choral sounds we're familiar with are still

still around, and just as in FFIX, the love theme "Suteki Da Ne" provides the base for a few nice variations, but there's a surprising amount of more modern influence to the music. Right at the beginning, you're hit with a one-two punch: a light pop remix of the Crystal theme, combining a classic melody with a catchy beat, and then Another World, which is...geez, who ever thought we'd hear hard distorted rock in a Final Fantasy game? That's not even the only rockish track in the game, although the style certainly settles down later on. The world of Spira has a certain religious cast to its tunes, particularly the chorus-based temple themes, but there's also a lot more of that slow, catchy pop feel in more peaceful areas.

For the humble narrator's money, change is again a good thing. FFIX was definitely a sign of stagnation in the composition department, with an awful lot of melody recycling noticeable as you progressed from area to area. Bringing new staff in certainly gave things a shot in the arm, and an intelligently directed one, since the shift in musical styles provides an undeniably appropriate counterpoint to the new and recombined visual elements. A few long-time fans may complain, but they haven't truly been happy since 1993.

And that leads us to the doorstep of the other half of things -- how does it play? On the surface, the combat system in FFX doesn't look much different from VII or VIII. The abandonment of Active Time (FFX uses straight turn-based initiative) won't be noticed by any save the total gearheads. We're back to a three-character party, the spell system consumes plain old MP as usual, and the Over Drive system is a near-dead-ringer for the old Limit Breaks. It's been tweaked with some good ideas -- there are now alternate schemes for meter development, and

little twitch challenges for better results from OD attacks -- but it's nothing that wouldn't be immediately accessible to series veterans. One very big thing has changed, though. By tapping the L1 button, it's possible to swap the active character out of the party, replacing them with a character from reserve who can act immediately.

It's a revolutionary change, and one which improves the game immensely. Purists may claim that it makes battles "too easy" or some blithering waterhead nonsense like that. Such an attitude is dangerously wrong, and would require surgical repair without delay. In fact, this is the best thing that's happened to Final Fantasy in ages, gameplay-wise, a huge improvement to the ease of combat and character development.

Remember how annoying it's been to build up the abilities of your entire cast in earlier Final Fantasies? There are six or seven characters in the cast, all with plenty of strengths and personality, but invariably you rely on only three or four because that's all you can fit into the active party. The rest get short shrift, fall behind in levels, and leave you with nasty holes in your strategy if they happen to become vital late in the game. Now, that problem is completely gone. The active party is back down to the three-character maximum, but if you want to build someone waiting in the wings, just tap L1. That's all you need to do. If a character performs at least one action, they get a full share in the AP gained at the end of the battle, and then you can keep them in for more or rotate them out to make room for someone else.

Inventory development is far easier, too. Rikku is the thief character this time out, a specialized type with the

Steal and Use abilities. Normally, it would be a bother to keep her in the mix and gather the items she needs to become an effective force in combat, but now you can send her in, nick some items, and rotate her out easily to bring back a bread-and-butter fighter. After a little while of this, she'll have a huge inventory of special items that will come in handy throughout the rest of the game (not to mention handy stuff for healing and building up weapons), and she'll have grown strong enough to hang with the other characters in a straight fight. A similar principle applies to other characters who might have specialized abilities. Lulu's your mage -- if you need an elemental spell, bring her in. Wakka has some handy status-effect attacks -- if someone's vulnerable to Darkness or Silence, bring him in. Need healing? Save your items and call up Yuna.

You can compensate for weaknesses easily, too. If an enemy is strong against a character's attack type or elemental orientation, just send them out and make room for someone who can better take on that particular opponent. Fights are now much faster, and managing your strategy is a piece of cake in comparison to the laborious, haphazard party maneuverings of the earlier games. In short, huge swathes of the game are much easier and much more fun. Combat, character-building, gathering items, developing weapons, they're all improved greatly by the addition of this single, simple feature. Amazing that Square didn't think of it earlier.

Amidst all this high-speed combat and character maneuvering, the new summoning system is a bit of an anomaly. The Aeons (as they're now called) summoned by Yuna aren't the one-shot attacks we've come to know. Rather, they're characters like any other, with their own HP, MP, skills, spells, and Over Drive attacks. When called, they fight in place of the regular party until killed or dismissed, albeit with a few different conditions than ordinary fighters.

On the one hand, this makes the development and deployment of summons a more involving affair. There's more ways you can use them, especially as you master the means of developing their abilities -- they can learn new spells and gain stronger attributes by cannibalizing items, the same way you add new abilities to equipment. On the other hand, summoning an Aeon is a distinct break in the flow of a combat system that ordinarily moves very quickly. The animations aren't that much of a bother, since you again have an option to toggle short versions of the Aeons' dramatic entrances, but having to make that big an adjustment in your strategy certainly is. Even in boss battles, Aeons aren't usually a very practical alternative or complement to regular combat.

That is, perhaps, a testament to how powerful and useful your regular party can become, now that you can actually use all of it. The characters and the methods for building them are designed very well, to the point that they're all of them useful at some point or another -- only Wakka comes close to being a bit of a runt, thanks to his weak physical attacks and rather specialized secondary skills. As they move along the Sphere Grid, each retains their own particular personality, as it were, but gradually develops a breadth of skills to make them useful in more and more situations.

The Sphere Grid is an imposing sight, and an equally imposing task to try and describe in an accessible fashion. Perhaps it's easiest to state right from the beginning that this isn't a completely new system -- when you sit back and think about it, it's actually a close cousin to the development system in the Romancing SaGa games, albeit heavily revised. Final Fantasy X takes SaGa's preference for developing character a statistic and a skill at a time, and improves upon it by taking out the random element, instead giving the player more opportunities to guide development. The path characters follow is still more

straight and narrow than it might seem, especially during the earlier stretches of the game, but once you get going, there's plenty of opportunities to tweak a character to your liking.

While the Sphere Grid may look like it's composed of a few large groups of spheres, appearances are deceiving. In fact, those spheres are composed of dozens of tiny nodes, each connected together by snaky, linear paths. Each node, save for the occasional empty one placed to space out progress, represents an improvement in a character's abilities or attributes -- a new spell, a new skill, 200 more HP, four more Strength points, and so on. As they earn AP and Sphere Levels in battle, characters must progress across the Grid a node at a time, slowly working towards new and different abilities and gradually building their attributes.

Each character starts at a different point on the Grid, and its structure tends to direct them along a path suited to their areas of expertise. Thus, everyone has a little bit of individuality -- it's not like FFVII, where any character could master any skill. Tidus, Auron, and Kimahri follow paths comprised mainly of combat skills, while Yuna and Lulu are sent towards concentrations of magical skills, and Rikku follows a quirky route suited to her oddball personality. There are forks in the trail, though, some blocked at first, and once you find some rare items it's possible to backtrack or hop from one path of development to another.

Perhaps the only problem with the way the game progresses has to do with the pacing of certain gameplay challenges. The basic form of FFX's quest is as per the

other 3D Final Fantasies, with stretches that follow a straight and narrow path alternating between opportunities to break out and explore, and for the most part it works as well as it has before. Every so often, though, there are departures into heavy brain-teasing that stick out like a sore thumb. Each Temple (you'll understand if you play) is built around a lengthy puzzle involving switching spheres and moving blocks and doing all that other arbitrary puzzle stuff. They're designed well enough -- gaps in the logic are annoying, but easily overcome -- but they're not integrated into the rest of the game very well. After hours of fighting, cinemas, and wandering, the puzzles suddenly pop up like a brick wall. A better design would integrate them more evenly into the rest of the quest.

Issues like that stand out, though, because they're surrounded by so many significant new improvements. For something that's meant to finish up a long tradition, Final Fantasy X is an awfully radical departure -- it's as if we came to the major turning point two games early. But a high note is a high note, and the old guard of Final Fantasies is most certainly departing on a high note. What we have is the best-looking game of the series, arguably the best-playing as well, and some experiments in presentation that provide a strong foundation for more work along those lines in the future. Square may be going through some rough times financially at this point, but its creative stock has never been higher.

10 is a big number. Whether you reckon it in Arabic or Roman numerals, it's both a milestone met and a new stage begun. Very appropriate, don't you think? ■

**PRESENTA-
TION**

9.0

GRAPHICS

9.5

SOUND

9.4

GAMEPLAY

9.6

**LASTING
APPEAL**

9.5

FINAL

9.5

COOLEST OF THE COOL

By Brian Linder

IGN FilmForce thaws out this winter's coolest flicks.

T he holiday movie season is still in full swing. Harry Potter has cast his spell on moviegoers, and by the time you read these lines, Frodo and the Fellowship will be taking theaters by storm. But after our cinematic Christmas gift from Peter Jackson, the traditionally chilly winter movie season will set in. There typically aren't many big films during the January-March period, but we think these cool flicks could keep the box office from freezing over...

Brotherhood of the Wolf
Genre: Period Horror/Thriller
Rating: R
Release Date: 01/11/02
Starring: Samuel Le Bihan, Mark Dacascos, Vincent Cassel,
Director: Christophe Gans

Inspired by actual events that took place during the reign of King Louis XV, Brotherhood of the Wolf revisits one of the rare French myths, that of the "Beast of Gevaudan" which killed a number of persons before being vanquished under mysterious circumstances.

The film, from French director Christophe Gans, is set in 1765. A mysterious creature is ravaging the countryside of rural France, savagely killing scores of women and children. Unseen, possessing enormous strength and a seemingly near-human intelligence, the beast has eluded capture for years. Desperate to end the growing unrest of the populace, the King sends in a renowned scientist and his Iroquois blood brother, an unconventional team whose combined methods and capabilities may finally bring the beast down.

I am beyond stoked about this movie! I've been waiting to see it for months. It was originally scheduled for release in November but, for whatever reason, Universal Focus pushed it back. It just looks so awesome! A French period horror/thriller/action-adventure/romance/drama with subtitles!? I'm so there! Actually, there are rumors that the film will have an English dub, so there may be no subtitles to look forward to.

The Mothman Prophecies
Genre: Sci-Fi/Fantasy/Thriller/Romance
Rating: PG-13
Release Date: 01/25/02
Starring: Richard Gere, Laura Linney, Will Patton, Debra Messing
Director: Mark Pellington

Based on true events, The Mothman Prophecies examines a series of inexplicable occurrences through the eyes of one man. Unexplained lights in the sky...strange noises...and a bridge disaster. After his wife dies, a reporter travels to a small southern town to investigate a series of strange events that could point to an alien visitation. He is driven to extremes to investigate the mysterious circumstances surrounding the death of his wife – and how they might be connected to the strange phenomena in a town four hundred miles away.

So what is the Mothman? During 1966 and '67, UFOs, poltergeists, and "Men in Black" terrorized the small town of Point Pleasant, West Virginia. There was even a rash of cattle mutilations, but none of these phenomena were as disturbing as the creature that seemed to be at the center of it all – a gray-colored, winged humanoid that became known as the "Mothman." The events defy simple explanation and, even more disturbingly, seem to predict impending disasters.

According to Stax, IGN FilmForce's script reviewer extraordinaire, the screenplay updates the timeline of events from the original book that the film is based on, and

COOLEST OF THE COOL

By Brian Linder

the story is now set in present day. But the tone of the story, especially the creepiness, is still intact. This could be the first Richard Gere movie I'd actually pay to see in years!

Collateral Damage

Genre: Action/Thriller
Rating: R
Release Date: 02/08/02
Starring: Arnold Schwarzenegger, John Turturro, John Leguizamo, Cliff Curtis
Director: Andrew Davis

Collateral Damage tells the story of a family man and firefighter, Gordon Brewer (Arnold Schwarzenegger), who is plunged into the complex and dangerous world of international terrorism after he loses his wife and child in a bombing credited to Claudio "The Wolf" Perrini (Cliff Curtis). Frustrated with the official investigation and haunted by the thought that the man responsible for murdering his family might never be brought to justice, Brewer takes matters into his own hands and travels to Columbia to track down the terrorist.

It used to be that if Arnie kicked butt in a film, then the film kicked butt at the box office. That's not always true these days, but the "ripped from the headlines" story in Collateral Damage could be its saving grace.

This film was actually scheduled for release just after September 11th, but Warner Bros. saw fit to delay the release. Hopefully audiences will be ready to see Schwarzenegger kick some terrorist butt by January.

"For more info. on these and other movies, visit filmforce.ign.com."

Crossroads

NO POSTER AVAILABLE

Genre: Teen Adventure
Rating: PG-13
Release Date: 02/15/02
Starring: Britney Spears, Anson Mount, Zoe Saldana, Taryn Manning
Director: Tamra Davis

Three childhood friends take a cross-country road trip to stardom. Doesn't sound like much at first, does it? Just another teen road trip flick, huh? Well, this film has something going for it that no other film in history has had. Two little words that could send the box office receipts into the stratosphere: Britney Spears! Not only that, but the promise of a few brief moments of Britney Spears dancing in her underwear! I don't care if this is the suckiest movie ever made, dudes will flock to it in droves.

Dan Aykroyd and Kim Cattrall also star as Britney's parents in the story from director Tamra Davis (Billy Madison, Skipped Parts).

Believe it or not, the pic has actually been getting some decent early buzz, but we all know why you're going to be there.

Queen of the Damned

NO POSTER AVAILABLE

Genre: Suspense/Horror
Rating: Not Yet Rated
Release Date: 02/22/02
Starring: Aaliyah, Stuart Townsend, Marguerite Moreau Lena Olin
Director: Michael Rymer

Director Michael Rymer's adaptation of Anne Rice's best-selling novel, the supernatural adventure Queen of the Damned, follows the legendary vampire, Lestat (Stuart Townsend), who has reinvented himself as a rock star on the contemporary American music scene. His music wakes Akasha (Aaliyah), the queen of all vampires, whose

COOLEST OF THE COOL

By Brian Linder

malevolent power is so great that all the immortal vampires must stand against her if they hope to survive. As Lestat's music inspires Akasha to make him her king, Jesse (Marguerite Moreau), a young woman with a fascination for the dark side, falls in love with Lestat.

Queen of the Damned was singer/actress Aaliyah's last film before her life was tragically cut short in August 2001. Her fans will surely want to see her last performance, and fans of Anne Rice's works will also turn out for this one.

This Warner Bros. film also stars Matthew Newton, Vincent Perez and Lena Olin.
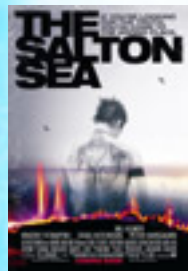
The Salton Sea
Genre: Thriller/Crime Drama
Rating: R
Release Date: 03/01/02
Starring: Val Kilmer, Peter Sarsgaard, Vincent D'Onofrio
Director: D.J. Caruso

The Salton Sea is the story of Danny Parker (Val Kilmer), a troubled man who witnesses his wife's murder. To avenge her death Danny decides to go underground, masquerading as a speed freak. Set adrift in a world where nothing is as it seems, he befriends slacker Jimmy the Fin (Peter Sarsgaard) and becomes involved in rescuing his neighbor Colette (Debra Kara Unger) from her own demons. Danny is antagonized by undercover narcotics agents (Anthony Lapaglia and Doug Hutchison) who think he's just another druggie, and sadistic dealer Pooh Bear (Vincent D'Onfronio) who has no clue about Danny's true intentions.

I've always been a big Val Kilmer fan, but his recent films (with the notable exception of Pollock) have been real snoozers. This is a guy with a real fan base out there that just hasn't lived up to my expectations of late. Let's hope this flick will put Val back on track. That said, this film

has been delayed more times than I can remember. Delays most always come as the result of problems, but it doesn't necessarily spell doom. Maybe they've edited the film into a perfect masterpiece. Who knows?

We Were Soldiers
NO POSTER AVAILABLE
Genre: Thriller/Crime Drama
Rating: R
Release Date: 03/01/02
Starring: Mel Gibson, Madeleine Stowe, Greg Kinnear Sam Elliott
**Director:** Randall Wallace

Paramount Pictures and Icon International present the film adaptation of the New York Times Bestseller We Were Soldiers Once...And Young by Lt. Gen. Harold G. Moore (Ret.) and Joseph Galloway. The film is set on November 14, 1965 in the Ia Drang Valley of Vietnam. In a small clearing called Landing Zone X-Ray, Lt. Col. Hal Moore (Mel Gibson) and 400 young fathers, husbands, brothers, and sons – all troopers from the U.S. 7th "Air" Cavalry were surrounded by 2000 enemy soldiers. The ensuing battle was one of the most savage in U.S. history. We Were Soldiers is a tribute to the nobility of those men under fire, their common acts of uncommon valor, and their loyalty to and love for one another.

This film has one of the most interesting casts of the winter. Not only do Mel Gibson, Madeleine Stowe (The General's Daughter) and Greg Kinnear (As Good As It Gets) star, but the supporting cast includes Sam Elliott (Tombstone, The Contender), Barry Pepper (Saving Private Ryan, The Green Mile), Keri Russell (TV's Felicity), and Chris Klein (Election).

This film is writer-producer-director Randall Wallace's second directorial outing. He first directed The Man in the Iron Mask, and is best known for penning Braveheart and Pearl Harbor. Since the cheesiness of the latter was probably due to Disney script-doctoring, I think this'll be a really solid film.

COOLEST OF THE COOL

By Brian Linder
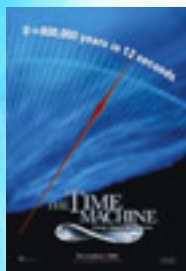
The Time Machine

Genre: Sci-Fi/Fantasy
**Rating:** Not Yet Rated
Release Date: 03/08/02
Starring: Guy Pearce, Jeremy Irons, Samantha Mumba
Director: Simon Wells, Gore Verbinski

In The Time Machine, based on the H.G. Wells' novel, Alexander Hartdegen (Guy Pearce) is one of the brightest scientists and inventors of the late 1800s. Driven by a personal tragedy he sets out to prove that time travel is possible. He tests his theories on a time machine of his own invention, and it hurtles him 800,000 years into the future where he discovers that mankind has divided into two races: the Eloi, a peace loving people, and the Morlocks, a fearsome and evil race that ventures out at night to hunt the Eloi.

Time Machine was mostly helmed by H.G. Wells' great-grandson, Simon Wells (The Prince of Egypt, Casper 2), but he had to step down late in the project due to "extreme exhaustion." At that point, DreamWorks asked Gore Verbinski (The Mexican, Mouse Hunt) to take over. On top of the directorial chaos, certain futuristic NYC scenes were re-edited in light of the World Trade Center attack. It's been delayed a couple of times, so who knows what shape this film will be in by the time it's released. The book is a classic! The film should at least be a fun ride.
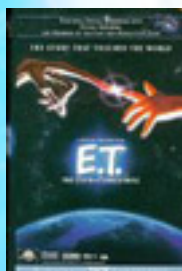
E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial – The 20th Anniversary

Genre: Sci-Fi/Fantasy/Family
Rating: PG
Release Date: 03/22/02
Starring: Henry Thomas, Dee Wallace Stone, Drew Barrymore, Peter Coyote
Director: Steven Spielberg

I just turned 26, so I remember E.T. coming out when I was in elementary school. It was the first non-Star Wars film that I remember people really going nuts over. It was quite the sensation back in 1981, but frankly, I don't know if I've seen the film in its entirety since then. I was talking to a group of teenagers recently, and I was surprised by how many of them had never seen the movie. Something tells me that, despite the film's charm, it might not age well. But we shall see on March 22nd. In case you're one of the few who have never seen it, E.T. tells the story of an alien creature, E.T., mistakenly left behind on Earth. When a young boy, Elliott (Henry Thomas), finds E.T. and hides him in his home, both their worlds are changed forever. E.T. teaches Elliott and his two siblings (Drew Barrymore and Robert MacNaughton), whose parents have recently separated, about caring and love, while the children protect E.T. from the malevolent world of grown-ups. Elliott and E.T. become so close that they share emotions; as E.T. becomes ill, so does Elliott. The children end up going on a fabulous adventure trying to help E.T. find a way back to his home planet.

For the re-release, some never-before-seen footage has been added, and some rather controversial edits have been made. Despite the fact that it looks completely stupid, guns have been digitally removed from policemen's hands and replaced with walkie-talkies. A spokesman for Spielberg explained the changes saying, we were all "less aware" of the harm that guns can do back in the early '80s. There are also strange reports of a new "bar scene" where Greedo shoots first.

One Hour Photo

NO POSTER AVAILABLE

Genre: Thriller
Rating:R
Release Date: Winter 2002
Starring: Robin Williams, Connie Nelson, Michael Vartan, Eriq La Salle
Director: Mark Romanek

COOLEST OF THE COOL

Robin Williams portrays Sy Parrish, a lonely photo technician at the local SavMart one-hour photo counter who develops an unsettling obsession with his long time customers, the Yorkin family, with whom he invents a familial connection.

Is Robin Williams desperate for a new image? Well, this is certainly the way to do it. Don't expect to see him in an old lady's wig or a dress in this one. And for my money, that's a good thing.

This Fox Searchlight film marks the screenwriting and directorial debut of acclaimed music video director Mark Romanek. Early reports say it's really solid, with "real characters" and "real emotion." Something we could use a little more of at the cinema these days. ■

-Brian Linder

It would've been impossible for us to preview every single movie coming out, so we had to neglect a couple we figured you already knew about, and some that we didn't think were as cool as these. Stay tuned to IGN Insider and IGN FilmForce for more on the cool movies of winter.

Be on the lookout for these other winter flicks:

I Am Sam 01/11/02
A Walk to Remember 01/25/02
Rollerball   02/08/02
John Q   02/15/02
Return to Neverland 02/15/02
Super Troopers   02/15/02
Waking Up in Reno 02/22/02
Death to Smoochy   03/15/02
Ice Age   03/15/02
Blade 2: Bloodhunt   03/22/02
Hart's War   03/22/02

2
RESULTS
Random Poll Questions and Results

**Question: What wide release are you most anticipating this December?**

Ali 72 6.4%
The Fellowship of the Ring 853 76.5%
How High 11 0.9%
Impostor 4 0.3%
The Majestic 20 1.7%
No Man's Land 2 0.1%
Not Another Teen Movie 25 2.2%
Ocean's 11 73 6.5%
Vanilla Sky 38 3.4%
Other 17 1.5%

Total Votes 1115 100%

Question: Which comic book-based film are you most anticipating?

The next Batman movie 117 11.5%
Blade 2 116 11.4%
Catwoman 8 0.7%
Daredevil 44 4.3%
The Hulk 47 4.6%
Iron Man 24 2.3%
Spider-Man 413 40.6%
Wonder Woman 7 0.6%
X-Men 2 222 21.8%
Other 19 1.8%

Total Votes 1017 100%
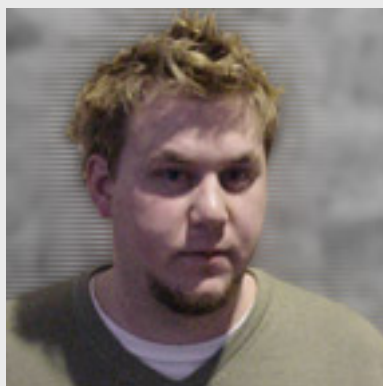
Matt Casamassina

This Month in GameCube ::

Merry Christmas. Happy Chanukah. Cheery holiday. Whatever floats your particular boat.

Finally, the GameCube is out on the market. It's no longer myth, but rather something tangible. Doesn't it make you feel all tingly inside? The good news is that the beast of a machine appears to be selling very well despite a decidedly lackluster effort by Nintendo to fully promote it. Initial sales of GameCube topped 700,000 units and the Big N expects that number to rise substantially to more than 1.2 million by the end of the year. Also, Nintendo recently promised to have 41 titles available for its system in the U.S. by March 2002 -- quite a difference from N64's drip-paced release schedule.

In this December issue of Unplugged, we've focused our efforts on previewing some of the more obscure titles underway for your favorite next-generation console. You may not even know they're on the way, in fact, but Namco's Smashing Drive, THQ's Dark Summit and Acclaim's Jeremy McGrath Supercross World are worthy additions to GCN's growing library. Read up and enjoy. We'll be back next month with updates on other exciting games in development, but in the meantime enjoy and have a great holiday.

For more Cube news, reviews, previews, and more, visit **http://cube.ign.com.**

Featured Preview ::

Preview :: Jeremy McGrath Supercross World
Acclaim will bring the first dirtbike title to GameCube in early 2002. Feel pain. Eat dirt.

Preview :: Dark Summit
The only snowboarding game that blends a plot-filled adventure with jaw dropping tricks.

Editor's Most Wanted ::

1 :: Legend of Zelda

2 :: Mario Sunshine

3 :: Metroid Prime

4 :: Resident Evil

5 :: Soul Calibur 2

Office Abuse ::

Matt has no alibi for his whereabouts during the night that Laura Palmer was killed.

GameCube :: Preview

SMASHING DRIVE

Hardcore cab driving races to GameCube. Crush and destroy everything that stands in your way.

There was a time when the thought of Namco gracing a Nintendo console with software was just a fantasy. However those dreams have now turned into reality and the company will be releasing its first bit of software in early 2002. No it's not one of the company's renowned fighters, it's *Smashing Drive*. The action racer is a port of the arcade game by the same name. It will feature everything the arcade version had, and to compensate for the head-to-head link up feature, will also include an all-new two-player competition mode.

The Point of View-developed title pits racers in the fare-driven world of a cabby. The idea is to find as many shortcuts as possible to garner the best fares. No, the premise isn't new. Sega started the checkered madness in 1998 when *Crazy Taxi* hit the arcades. However, *Smashing Drive* brings an all-new twist to the yellow cabs, which come equipped with outlandish power-ups including unforgiving battering rams, turbo rockets, and sharp-toothed buzz-saws. Using these unlikely vehicle upgrades, players must run the competition off of the road. Also, in contrast to *Crazy Taxi*, the goal is to finish the race at an end point, whereas picking up and dropping off customers was key to *Crazy Taxi*.

It's not all mindless crashing, though. Traffic will still pose a problem, so you'll want to use your "claxon" (or "taxi horn") to clear traffic. You can use it in spurts to clear paths and if you're good enough, you don't have to smash your way through the streets as much. The arcade version also featured a special double gas tap that gave way to faster acceleration. Presumably this will be carried over to the GameCube version as well, which gives pro players a little more control options to deal with.

The arcade version was designed around hardware developed by Gaeleco, the original developers. And even though the original hardware was capable of drawing 10,000 polygons per frame, Gaeleco didn't have the final working boards until the project was nearly done. That said, the game's strength does not lie in its visuals. In fact, the first screenshots of *Smashing Drive* on GameCube paint a pretty ugly picture. One almost gets the feeling that the game was created for the N64 and ported to GameCube. However, we have yet to see it in motion on the GameCube hardware so there's still a glimmer of hope. Even so, we don't expect to be wowed by the visuals.

The high-action, yellow and black thrill ride hits Game-Cube early next year. If you're looking for unadulterated arcade madness, *Smashing Drive* may just be for you.

– Fran Mirabella III ■

Details ::

Publisher ::	Namco
Developer ::	Point of View
Genre ::	Racing
# of Players ::	1-2
Release Date ::	January 2002

GameCube :: Preview

JEREMY McGRATH SUPERCROSS WORLD

Acclaim will bring the first dirtbike title to GameCube in early 2002. Feel pain. Eat dirt.

Acclaim plans to be the first third-party publisher to release a dirtbike motocross title on GameCube with *Jeremy McGrath Supercross World*. Already released for the PlayStation 2, the GameCube version will be a port, and if the PS2 version is anything to judge by you're in for a pretty unbelievable experience. Unfortunately, that's not a good thing.

Let's first discuss one of the best 3D dirt bike games to ever grace a home console -- *Excitebike 64*. It featured a slick graphics engine by N64 standards and even more importantly a deep control scheme that let amateurs keep their ground and pros soar as high as they wanted. It was surely a tight game for its time and the legacy still lives on. Cue *Jeremy McGrath Supercross World*. The title will be released for GameCube in early 2002, and like so many other Acclaim titles will be a PS2 port. Sadly, it will likely carry over all the bad traits seen in this already-released version.

If you've played *Excitebike 64* and try to pick up Jeremy McGrath you're going to be pretty let down. The title lacks a sense of speed, the control is stiff, and the game is altogether extremely floaty. It just doesn't feel right and that becomes immediately apparent upon playing it. Of course, we're in no position to review the finer or lesser points of the title for GameCube. Currently Acclaim has shown nothing of it for Nintendo's next-generation system, but as we said it's pretty likely to be almost a direct port of the PS2 version. So, let's talk a little bit about what the game does have to offer.

Players will have the option to race Baja style, outdoors, indoors, or even in a stunt/freestyle mode. The Baja mode offers a freer environment in which to roam, letting players create their own path as long as they abide by checkpoints. More familiar are the outdoor motocross and indoor supercross modes, which pit players on defined tracks with other racers. Of course, the experience wouldn't be complete without a full-fledged stunt mode. *Jeremy McGrath Supercross World* offers up what is called "Stunt Advantage System." A meter on the bottom of the screen fills up with every trick you successfully pull off. When it completely fills up you will get a turbo so you can catch even more air for a bigger set of tricks. The stunt system allows for a fair amount of tricks and by completing challenges you'll open up secret game features.

Acclaim's current plans call for a February 2002 release. Stay tuned for more information on any upgrades or alterations that the GameCube version might see.

– Fran Mirabella III ∎

Details ::

Publisher ::	Acclaim
Developer ::	Acclaim Studios (SLC)
Genre ::	Racing
# of Players ::	1-2
Release Date ::	February 2002

GameCube :: Preview

DARK SUMMIT

The only snowboarding game that blends a plot-filled adventure with jaw-dropping tricks.

Looking for a little adventure to go with your snowboarding exploits? THQ has come up with an original idea for an "action-adventure snowboarder." Developed by Radical Entertainment *Dark Summit* will follow in the aftermath of EA's clever stunt-heavy *SSX Tricky*, but intends to carve a different path by mixing sport and action-adventure elements into one snowboarding experience.

A first in snowboarding, the game will feature an in-depth storyline that follows the adventures of Naya, a rebellious and of course beautiful female boarder. In the midst of breaking out elaborate tricks and catching big air, Naya will encounter more than 45 different challenges with plot twists and turns such as escaping an angry ski patrol. *Dark Summit* could be described as a mountainside platformer, where the main character is on a snowboard. Naya will explore the snowy environment while pulling off tricks and avoiding trouble, such as rangers who don't want her around. As it turns out, Chief O'Leary and his lackey rangers don't want you on their mountain, especially on the backside where something is afoot. Of course, being the rebellious Naya, you'll pay no attention to the Chief's wishes and press on.

So, you'll begin on the lower portion of the mountain. Here you'll complete tasks and eventually gain lift points so you can reach higher parts of the mountain. The point of the trick system is to build experience points. As you bust out big trick sets you'll earn points to use towards getting new snowboards and outfits. Some of the tasks you'll have to complete include chasing characters down, pulling off combo sets, or even starting an avalanche. The idea is to explore, uncover, and complete enough goals to unlock new parts of the game.

RAIL LAND + NOSE MANUAL GRIND

The control system is relatively simple and intuitive to make exploring easy. As we hinted at, the game is very goal-based and tricks aren't meant to be the only focus. That said, Naya has great balance on rails and can pull of a good set of tricks without much trouble. There is a grind button, grab button and a handplant button when you want to get fancy in halfpipes. Tricks can even be tweaked with a separate button. If you want to pull off the really lavish tricks, however, you'll need to explore the mountains, as they're actually hidden as items around the mountain.

Visually speaking, *Dark Summit* doesn't look bad by GameCube standards. Naya is composed of a decent amount of polygons and there are some over-the-top animations to keep things interesting. However, it is expected that the GameCube version will come with some of the same graphical problems the Xbox version had which include a somewhat unstable 30 frames per second framerate and pop-in.

All that said, though, we're anxious to see how THQ's unique adventure pans out. It provides an easy-access tricks system and lots of mountain to explore.
– Fran Mirabella III ∎

Details ::

Publisher ::	THQ
Developer ::	Radical Entertainment
Genre ::	Sports
# of Players ::	2
Release Date ::	Q1 2002

Vincent Lopez

This Month in Xbox ::

Initial estimates have the Xbox breaking 500,000 units already, and that was the number as quoted for the end of November. Obviously the people have spoken, or they would have spoken if they weren't too busy trying to unlock the sluttier outfits in Dead or Alive 3. Some estimates even have the Xbox beating out Nintendo's GameCube in terms of unit sales, aided by the lack of Nintendo's key figures (Mario, Zelda), and some heavy Xbox marketing over the last month.

What's next? The online launch, of course. Not only do you have amazing second year titles like Project Ego, Brute Force and Unseen to look forward to, but you've got an entirely new way to play. You might have experienced games like Everquest and Unreal Tournament, but those were created for a PC, and reflect the alien PC environment. Dreamcast? That was in the slow lane. It's time to find out what it's like to get high speed, action-packed, hell bent and trigger happy. The surface hasn't even begun to be scratched. The future is coming.

For more Xbox news, reviews, previews, and more, visit:
http://xbox.ign.com.

Featured Preview ::
027 :: ESPN MLS Extra Time 2002

Also In This Issue ::

ESPN NFL Primetime 2002 ::
Does the Xbox really need four football games? Konami says "Hai!"

NHL 2002 ::
The best and only hockey "sim" on the Xbox.

Editor's Most Wanted ::

5 :: Xbox online launch

4 :: Jet Grind Radio Future

3 :: Blood Wake

2 :: GTA 3 (Xbox)

1 :: Tony Hawk 3

Office Abuse ::

Vincent Lopez, also known as Sir Delicious, Mr. Mtzlplck, and Vincent Pencil, has only been arrested in 22 of the states, though he's proud to have been arrested and charged in both states outside of the continental US.
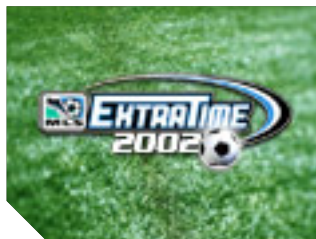
Xbox :: Preview
ESPN MLS EXTRA TIME 2002
Konami's entry into the Xbox soccer derby should be kickin'!

Like the sport itself, a great soccer videogame should be straight forward and simple where the skill of the players means everything. With Konami's ESPN MLS Extra Time 2002 you're not only getting one hell of a long title, you're getting the latest generation soccer game based on the strong J.League Winning 11. With the soul of one of the most celebrated Japanese soccer games behind it, MLS Extra Time should have a solid control scheme and true to life gameplay.

Even with authentic soccer strategy and mechanics there's nothing like having plenty of extras to keep things interesting. MLS will have more than 100 teams including the entire MLS plus 61 national teams. By our math that adds up to 73 teams, so where are those other 27+ teams coming from? It's unlikely we'll see European league teams because EA owns the FIFA license. We likely won't see any real players, other than those featured in Major League Soccer, in MLS Extra Time either. So there will be plenty of Landon Donovan but no Michael Owen or Edgar Davids.

With ESPN in their corner, Konami will have all of the presentation that the sports and entertainment network has to offer. Longtime SportsCenter Anchor Jack Edwards and Luis Tapia will handle all of the announcing duties. It's funny with all of the talent at their disposal with their ESPN deal, that Konami doesn't make more of an effort to have the very best commentary of any sports videogame. Soccer commentary is all about flow and personality of the announcers, just like the sport itself.

Various play modes like Cup Mode, International Cup and Training Mode are all standard but the Franchise mode included in MLS should be quite nice. You'll have to handle trades, drafts, training and retirements like a real MLS general manager. Soccer isn't a very stat-heavy pro sport, so the Franchise mode may only appeal to the most diehard soccer fans. But all of the modes are supposedly just icing to the cake of solid gameplay that MLS Extra Time promises.

There will be a race between Konami and EA Sports to get soccer title to the Xbox. Both companies are saying the first quarter of 2002 is the time, and to all of us here at IGN, that usually means March. Just in time for the beginning of the MLS season and a few weeks before the 2002 World Cup kicks off in Japan and South Korea. A company like Konami will likely have something to prove this upcoming year in the world of soccer videogames and MLS Extra Time should do a lot of the proving come spring. *– Aaron Boulding* ∎

Details ::

Publisher ::	Konami
Developer ::	Konami
Genre ::	Sports
# of Players ::	4
Release Date ::	Q1 2002

Xbox :: Preview
ESPN NFL PRIMETIME 2002
Does the Xbox really need four football games? Konami says "Hai!"

You can never have too much NFL football, either in real life or on the Xbox. With Sega, EA Sports and Microsoft themselves already throwing their helmets into the ring with NFL 2K2, Madden NFL 2002 and NFL Fever 2002, respectively, Konami must be convinced there's room for a fourth player in the NFL videogame category. That's how we end up with ESPN NFL Primetime 2002. The truth is that nobody does football better on television than ESPN. It's their bread and butter and you won't miss a beat with their coverage. But Primetime on the Xbox is a different kind of football on your TV. It's got to make good use of the Xbox hardware to bring home the real NFL experience.

Tom Jackson, Edgerrin James and Chris Berman are the big name personalities being used to push Primetime so there should be plenty of that good old ESPN polish to get us in the mood. It'll be interesting to see how well developed the pre and post game segments are on the Xbox. You can crank out a lot of top quality sound and video on this system and if Konami puts it to good use, we may have some new motivation for playing football. How cool would it be to have some no name scrub who just scored 4 TDs featured on the most game interview segment?

Five gameplay modes should provide plenty of depth. Practice mode to hone the skills, tournament mode to keep the competition fierce and an all out GM mode are just the kind of variety one should expect from a football title nowadays. While we're not sure how deep the player improvement system is, rookies and young players will improve as they gain experience. Better stats lead to higher ratings that lead to higher salaries. That's real NFL football right there.

How far is Konami going with the ESPN immersion? Not only do you get Tom Jackson and "Boomer" on the call you're going to get the ESPN graphics and overlays plus genuine statistical analysis and research from the worldwide leader in sports. Throw in the sports ticker across the bottom of the screen, and you're going to get dimwitted relatives asking if they turn the channel from the game they think you're watching. Just tell 'em there's only five minutes left. Which, as you know, is really 20 minutes of real time and possibly even longer in videogame football time.

ESPN Primetime will hit in early 2002 right along with Sega's NFL 2K2. We expect both titles to land on Xbox in January and we also expect a whole new round of "Which football game is better?" debates to kick off around that time. With the real NFL playoffs in full swing, Konami will be striking while the football iron is hot.
– Aaron Boulding ■

Details ::

Publisher ::	Konami
Developer ::	Konami
Genre ::	Sports
# of Players ::	4
Release Date ::	January 2002

Xbox :: Review
NHL 2002

The best and only hockey "sim" on the Xbox.

A good hockey sim can truly be a thing of beauty forever if you get some knowledgeable people working on it who know and appreciate the game. The fact that EA Canada is behind EA Sports' marvelous NHL 2002 is satisfying because nothing smacks of hockey like the word "Canada", eh? Rather than being salty and upset the United States has stolen several of their teams and usurped the spirit of their national sport, the folks at EA Canada has simply delivered the best hockey simulation anywhere on any platform with NHL 2002 on Xbox. When you ignore Midway's NHL Hitz because of its arcade leanings, you realize there's no hockey sim competition for EA's game. So they didn't have to make the game good, but they did because of an obvious love of the game.

Where do I start? The sense of speed and fluidity is as important to a hockey game as the ice or the skates. It's a defining characteristic of the sport and it's easy to duplicate in a videogame. Even with all of the adjustable settings and difficulty levels, the flow of NHL 2002 stays consistent. The animation of the players, so you can see what the heck is going on goes hand in hand with the speed of the game. You want to be able to appreciate Jaromir Jagr's strength, agility and grace when you slash through the defense and NHL 2002 allows you to do just that with amazing articulation and authentic moves. All of that motion capture technology has finally paid off because we're playing EA's games on systems that can faithfully reproduce the moves.

We know NHL 2002 plays an outstanding game of hockey but they went nine steps further by including plenty of depth to keep us playing. The NHL cards, a brilliant ripoff of the feature first introduced in Madden football, are nice rewards for playing well and playing often. Unlocking new post-goal celebrations with NHL cards is a stroke of genius and enough motivation in and of itself to keep playing. Can't wait until we can unlock celebrations in other sports games like football and baseball.

The comprehensive season mode comes with all of the stats, info and roster management you can handle. Teams will propose trades to you throughout the season which is something that's been lacking in many of EA's other sports titles over the years. Most of the CPU's trade offers are as lame as the ones you try to pull off yourself, but that's the charming part of it. Random hot, cold and fatigue streaks all shape the flavor and strength of your team from game to game.

The nuts and bolts of NHL 2002 are so complete that it's easy to overlook the gorgeous graphics and outstanding audio. Cuts in the ice, animated interactive crowds and rink ice that reflects players and shadows without so much as a flutter is what makes this game beautiful. The best commentary of any sports game to date doesn't hurt either. Get this game if you like sports, not just hockey. *-- Aaron Boulding* ∎

Details ::

Publisher ::	Electronic Arts
Developer ::	EA Canada
Genre ::	Sports
# of Players ::	4
Release Date ::	December 2001

Ratings ::

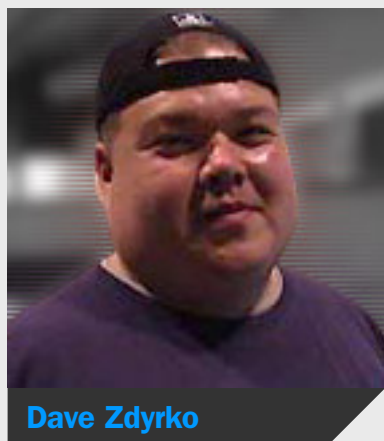|	
Presentation ::	9.0
Graphics ::	9.0
Sound ::	9.0
Gameplay ::	9.0
Lasting Appeal ::	9.0

Overall Score

9.0

Editor's Choice Award

Dave Zdyrko

This Month in PlayStation 2 ::

It's a really good time to be a gamer -- especially if you're one that's expecting lots of gifts for the holidays. There's no doubt in my mind that 2001 will go down in the annals of videogame history as one of the greatest years yet. Not only have we've seen successful launches of two new and extremely powerful systems, Xbox and GameCube, but we've also seen one of the most amazing years ever for any single console, as far as software is concerned, regarding the PS2.

Sony's successor to the PlayStation has had a year that's been filled with more triple-A titles than I've ever seen released before for a single platform in a single calendar year. If you look at the top five PS2 games of the year, which are Metal Gear Solid 2, Gran Turismo 3, Grand Theft Auto III, Tony Hawk 3, and Devil May Cry in my book, they're pretty comparable to the best games ever released on the PlayStation.

That's not bad for a console's first full year. Let's all hope that the future is equally as bright.

For PS2 news, reviews, previews and more visit http://ps2.ign.com.

Featured Preview ::

State of Emergency
Yes, it's paranoid, violent, and antisocial, but you'll still get to play it inside of two months from now.


Maximo: Ghosts to Glory
Ghosts to Glory? Glory hallelujah is more like it; Capcom has revitalized 2D gaming in perfect 3D style.

Editor's Most Wanted ::

1 :: A new album from Christina Aguilera
2 :: Job as a bodyguard for *NSYNC
3 :: A kiss to begin the New Year
4 :: Hemorrhoid cream that actually works
5 :: Miracle diet pill

Office Abuse ::
Dave Z can throw down a pint of Guinness in less than four seconds.
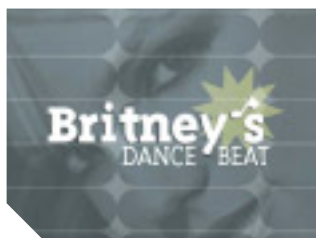
PlayStation 2 :: Preview
BRITNEY'S DANCE BEAT
The best-looking *dame* on PlayStation 2.

Games like *Star Wars Galaxies* for PC, *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty* for PS2 and *Star Wars Rogue Leader: Rogue Squadron II* for GameCube were considered to be the best games of the show at last May's Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles, but the biggest news to come out of those three hellish days was undoubtedly that THQ had signed on to publish a Britney Spears videogame. Yes, that's right, an all-new videogame starring everyone's favorite ex-Mouseketeer and multi-platinum award-winning recording artist, Britney Jean Spears, is coming home to your very own PlayStation 2.

Titled *Britney's Dance Beat*, the game will have you rhythmically pressing buttons to show off your dancing skills while you move to the beat of the best songs from Ms. Britney Spears. Your goal is to become a backup dancer for her upcoming tour, and to make things a little spicier, you will have the option to be one of a variety of dancers that each brings to the table his or her very own unique dancing styles and moves.

The songs you'll be able to get down with in the game include all-time Britney classics like *Baby...One More Time*, *Oops! I Did it Again*, and *Stronger*, as well as new tracks off of her just-released album titled *Britney*, like *I'm a Slave 4 U* and *Overprotected*.

And if that's not enough to bring an exuberant amount of joy to all of you diehard Britney fans, how about trying this one on for size -- when you beat songs in the game you will unlock exclusive behind-the-scenes footage and concert video that shows Britney like you've never seen her before. This includes a special 360-degree immersive video that lets you actually control and move around the camera.

In addition to the single-player dancing, which will feature authentic choreography from Britney's upcoming tour, *Britney's Dance Beat* will let you battle it out with a friend in an exciting two-player competitive mode. Therefore, you will finally have your shot to prove once and for all that you are the world's biggest Britney Spears fan and a dancer extraordinaire, and that your rhythmless friends are nothing more than Britney-wannabes.

Do you have what it takes to back up Britney in her upcoming tour? Well, you'll have your chance to find out when THQ releases *Britney's Dance Beat* for PlayStation 2 in the spring of 2002. If you don't yet think this is a must-own game for fans of the talented-beyond-her-years Britney, THQ is releasing this Metro Corp. developed game at the priced-to-sell suggested retail price of $29.99. The PlayStation 2 has never *looked* this fine. — *Dave Zdyrko* ∎

Details ::

Publisher ::	THQ
Developer ::	Metro Corp.
Genre ::	Dance
Number of Players ::	1-2
Release Date ::	Spring 2002

PlayStation 2 :: Preview

STATE OF EMERGENCY

Yes, it's paranoid, violent, and antisocial, but you'll still get to play it inside of two months from now.

The lot of you can shut your rumormongering traps -- no, *State of Emergency* has not been "banned." The only reason Rockstar's riot simulator has been under wraps during these last few months is that Vis Interactive has been hammering on the hull to make it even bigger, better-looking, and more absurdly violent than we could have possibly imagined at its E3 debut. The 3D engine now manages more than 250 rioters on screen at a time, well in excess of what was originally promised, with thoroughly interactive environments. Smashable windows, exploding cars, and all kinds of other destructible objects should make for a very entertaining riot zone.

New on the stage are a total of five playable characters, each with their own reasons to hit the streets and give corporate rule a kick in the teeth. We have disgruntled ex-cop Roy "Mack" Macneil, disgruntled ex-lawyer Anna "Libra" Price, disgruntled ex-gangster Hector "Spanky" Soldado, disgruntled ex-boxer Eddy "Bull" Raymonds, and disgruntled ex-student Ricky "Phreak" Trang, all of whom have a bone to pick with the "Corporation" that's taking over the country, and none of whom have any qualms about breaking a few windows to settle things. No, there is not a lot of love going around in this game -- the perfect accompaniment to those post-holiday winter blues. *State of Emergency* should be arriving just in time that way on January 29. **-- David Smith** ∎

Details ::

Publisher ::	Rockstar Games
Developer ::	Vis
Genre ::	Action
Number of Players ::	1
Release Date ::	January 29, 2002

PlayStation 2 :: Preview

MAXIMO: GHOSTS TO GLORY

Ghosts to Glory? Glory hallelujah is more like it; Capcom has revitalized 2D gaming in perfect 3D style.

You know, when I first saw Maximo, it didn't look all that intimidating. Unlike Devil May Cry, Twisted Metal: Black, or Medal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty, Capcom's newest PS2 title features a little guy with a big head who is occasionally stripped down to his boxers and forced to fight.

It's just a matter of touching the PS2 Dual Shock. After a moment or two Maximo will instantly grab you with its friendly vice grip of 2D joy and never, ever let go. This is the kind of game people stay up all night playing for like two to three days just because it's that good.

The story is rather moot. Players begin Maximo simply enough: they attempt to rid the medieval land of evil. Armed with a sword and equipped with some armor, players immediately confront earthquake-prone ground that erupts under their feet at any given moment, a slew of enemies that range in class and ability including skeletons, zombies, crows and a horde of others that we shouldn't reveal just yet, and tons of useful and funny powerups that increase the game's level of fun 10-fold.

Capcom's latest effort brings the best aspects of 2D gaming into the 3D world with an ease, comfort, and brilliance that has thus far only been accomplished by the likes of Nintendo's Shigeru Miyamoto. *– Douglass C. Perry* ∎
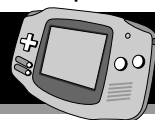

Details ::

Publisher ::	Capcom Entertainment
Developer ::	Capcom Digital Studios
Genre ::	Action
Number of Players ::	1
Release Date ::	February 2002

Craig Harris

This Month in GBA ::

Though 2001 was a very good year for Game Boy Advance games, I'm really looking forward to what's coming for the system in 2002.

For one thing, developers are getting more comfortable with the system. The first full year out of the gate, most programmers aren't trying to push the hardware too far, but adventurous programmers have been learning and testing to see just what this bad boy can do. If you thought Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 was impressive, wait until you see what the development team's learned and implemented for its sequel, due for release early next year.

More importantly, games will start getting cheaper. Nintendo isn't completely satisfied with the sales of many of Game Boy Advance products that are on the shelves. Why? Most third-party games are up there at the 40 dollar range...almost at the same price tag as PlayStation One games. Next year Nintendo will reduce the costs of cartridge manufacturing by about two bucks a unit, allowing publishers to reduce their cartridge price to the coveted $29.99 - $34.99 price range. How nice.

2001 was a strong GBA year, but 2002 will be even stronger.

For more GBA news, reviews, previews, and more, visit **http://pocket.ign.com.**

Featured Preview ::

Also In This Issue ::

Preview :: 4x4 Off-Roaders
Get down in the dirt with this impressive 3D effort for the Game Boy Advance.

Preview :: Star Fight
Yes, Virginia, the Game Boy Advane can push polygons.

Editor's Most Wanted ::

1 :: Smash Bros. Pocket (doesn't exist yet, but one can dream)

2 :: Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 GBA (reality)

3 :: Crash Bandicoot GBA (reality)

4 :: Pilotwings for GBA (another dream)

5 :: Punch Out GBA (again, it's a dream)

Office Abuse ::
You don't want to know what Craig does with all the drained AA batteries he's got laying around...

Game Boy Advance :: Preview
SUPER MARIO WORLD
A classic SNES design hits the Game Boy Advance a decade after its release

When the Super NES was released in 1991, Nintendo, like every good game developer with hot new hardware, set out to create a great-playing game that showed the gaming world just what was possible to pull off on the system. The result was the system's first pack-in game, *Super Mario World*, an absolutely fabulous continuation of the Mario series, and probably the best one of the bunch, too.

Fast forward to now-ish. For Nintendo's first game on the Game Boy Advance, it ports an existing Mario game to the system in the form of *Super Mario Advance*, and while it shows that the system can do some neat tricks, the company can't really hide the fact that *Super Mario Bros. 2* wasn't exactly the best of the Mario bunch. So, to make up for it, the company's reviving its top-notch *Super Mario World* to be the next Mario game on the handheld...and while the company still has yet to develop an original Mario adventure on the system, we can make due with this one while Nintendo game designers keep toiling about over in Japan.

For those who missed out on the original run of *Super Mario World*, the game continued the gameplay and design that was established in *Super Mario Bros. 3*, but with the enhanced power of the Super NES' sprite and background capabilities at the hands of the programmers, some seriously cool game elements, such as boss battles on rotating platforms and awesome mosaic transitions between levels, emerged. This game also introduced a Mario character that some folks couldn't live without: the green dinosaur buddy Yoshi. He's evolved over the last decade, so he looks a bit different in his gaming debut. Even so, this lizard adds a lot to the fun of *Super Mario World*. And with the power of the GBA at the hands of game developers, the portable port of *Super Mario World* will be as spot-on as you can get. In fact, the game will even add some new elements, such as including digitized speech for several of the characters.

The odd thing about *Super Mario Advance 2* is its inclusion of the same multiplayer, single cartridge link cable supported mini-game that was included in *Super Mario Advance*. No additions, no changes...the developers just took the same code and art from the first game and plopped it right back into the sequel. I'm not exactly sure why they bothered to do this...laziness? At any rate, if you missed this multiplayer minigame the first time, it's essentially a redesign of the classic Mario Bros. action game. It's a lot of fun, but was it enough to add it in the package a second time?

The game is set for release in Japan this December 14th, but it's appearing on retailer's lists for a February 2002 release in the US. What's more, it's showing up on lists as *Super Mario World*...not *Super Mario Advance 2*. *– Craig Harris* ∎

Details ::

Publisher ::	Nintendo
Developer ::	Nintendo
# of Players ::	4
Genre ::	Platform
Release Date ::	February 2002

Game Boy Advance :: Preview
4x4 OFF-ROADERS
Get down in the dirt with this impressive 3D effort for the Game Boy Advance

Once upon a time a PC game developer named Nova Logic popularized a technique known as "voxels" in a series of its games. A voxel is a technique that allows developers to create a 3D terrain with a flat 2D graphic. Each pixel on the graphic has a height value, so when that's applied to the entire graphic, rolling hills or harsh cliffs will appear. The technique is a lost art in game development now, since voxels aren't nearly as pretty or as versatile as polygons, and 3D hardware can't assist voxels in the same way that it can push textures and polys.

But the technique is making a return, as a company known as Small Rockets in Europe has set out to create a game using a voxel engine on the Game Boy Advance. *4x4 Off-Roaders* is a work-in-progress racing game that marries basic 3D objects on top of voxel terrain to, hopefully, create a wild and realistic off-roading adventure on the handheld.

The final product, currently scheduled to be completed next year, will feature realistic physics, varying terrain, and multiple racing modes (including four player link) in a 3D game engine that runs at an acceptably smooth 20-30 frames per second. For a system that's without any 3D hardware, that's an impressive feat.

The game currently does not have a publisher, but judging from an early look at the game in action, we won't be surprised if it pops up on shelves after the new year. *-- Craig Harris* ■

Details ::

Publisher ::	TBA
Developer ::	Small Rockets
# of Players ::	4
Genre ::	Racing
Release Date ::	February 2002

Game Boy Advance :: Preview
STAR FIGHT

Yes, Virginia, the Game Boy Advance can push polygons

Though voxels are impressive in their own right, nothing's wrong with good old-fashioned polygons, and some developers are set out to show that the GBA has at least a bit of horsepower to recreate a true, albeit graphically limiting 3D engine. Remember *Star Fox* on the SNES? Graphic State Games is currently developing a similar game for the handheld featuring its own proprietary game engine…without the need for an FX Chip.

Graphic State Games has already proven itself as an advanced Game Boy Advance developer with the creation of its raycasting first person shooter engine, used in the upcoming Majesco action title *Dark Arena*. Though the company has kept hush-hush about what *Star Fight* is all about, the company revealed its first shots of the game in action…and for a system that wasn't created to do any 3D, the game does look impressive for a handheld action title. As long as the framerate stays relatively high, I don't think folks will care that buildings and objects lack any sort of detail. The cool, retro look is still in, right?

Graphic State Games currently does not have a publisher for *Star Fight*, but some companies have already expressed an interest in releasing the game stateside. Keep reading IGNpocket for more details on this game's development…there will be more to come in 2002, I assure you. *– Craig Harris* ■

Details ::

Publisher :: TBA
Developer :: Graphic State Games
# of Players :: 4
Genre :: Action
Release Date :: TBA 2002

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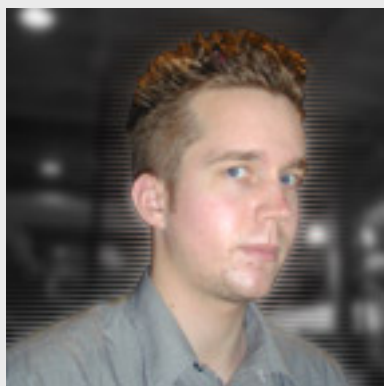
Ivan Sulic

This Month in PC ::

It has been a turbulent November, and December is giving us little the way of respite. Return to Castle Wolfenstein just edged itself in toward the end of last month and that quickly sent office work plummeting to an all time low of negative 15, only possible because we started at zero (stupid Fran and his stupid *Super Smash Bros. Melee*). But still, like some unwavering force, a bastion of journalistic and editorial greatness, I've found plenty of time outside of work on both weekends and weeknights to prep and push review after review with the noble intention of pleasing you, our holiday-frenzied readers. I guess the boss telling me to do these things under threat of clone replacement might provide some incentive...but for the most part, it's glaringly obvious that only my sheer dedication powers my drive. Well, that and the fact that burying my head in work shields me from having to deal with Jeremy robbling off about how "Jango Fett would look better on Xbox, Xbox!" 36 times a day... Jango, Jango!

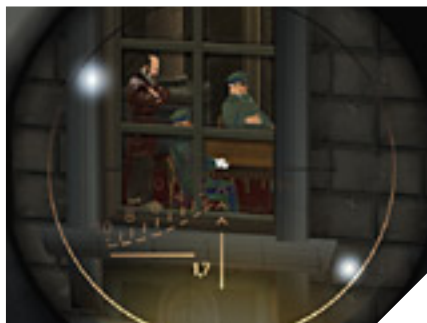For more PC news, reviews, previews, codes and more, visit **http://pc.ign.com.**

Featured Preview ::
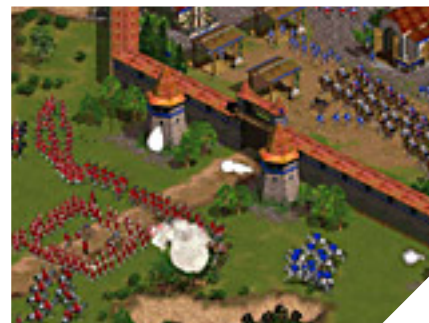**039** :: Prisoner of War

Also In This Issue ::
040 :: Preview: Hitman 2: Silent Assassin
041 :: Preview: Cossacks: Art of War

Hitman 2: Silent Assassin
Presumably there wouldn't even have been a sequel if he hadn't been so silent.

Cossacks: Art of War
Even more gaming goodness from the eighteenth century to yours.

Editor's Most Wanted ::

1 :: Star Wars Jedi Knight 2: Jedi Outcast

2 :: Neverwinter Nights

3 :: Thief III

4 :: Freedom Force

5 :: Freelancer

Office Abuse ::
Whenever I go to the bathroom I see the same person... He frightens me, and not just because he leers at my crotch while I stand at the urinal, but for other scarier reasons.

PC :: Preview
PRISONER OF WAR

A weaponless look World War II offers a lot of interesting opportunities for sneaky gameplay.

Over the last couple of years, we've seen a pretty big resurgence in the interest in World War II. Whatever the reason, the interest in the war has transferred over into the realm of gaming fairly extensively. One thing most of these games have in common is the focus on direct violence. While it certainly seems to fit the subject matter pretty darn well, it's nice to see that one company is taking a new approach to the whole thing with more thinking and less shooting. No shooting in fact. Codemasters and Wide Games will be bringing out *Prisoner of War* next summer to a crowd that may just need the break from violence to something a little more cerebral. The fact that you *are* in a prison camp in the middle of German territory means that if you ever *did* pick up a gun, you'd be dead pretty darn quick, so it makes sense.

But you won't just play any prisoner. In fact, you've been sent to prison on purpose. You play Louis Stone, an airforce pilot working for the precursor to MI-6. You've been sent to find out whether there is truth to the rumors that the Germans have secret weapons labs among the POW camps so that the Allies won't bomb them. So your job is to follow the daily routine while finding time to run around and pick up clues that will lead you to discovering the true nature of the camps.

Considering you have no weapons, you'll have to rely on stealth and creativity to get you through the three different camps unnoticed. The German guards are always on the lookout for escaped prisoners and will arrest you if caught, causing you to lose time in the jail. You'll have help getting around and finding information by way of the

other prisoners. They'll give you the heads up on locations of items and other secrets if you ask the right questions.

The entire game runs in real time all the time, so if you leave a door open somewhere and a guard finds it, even if you're on the other side of the camp, he'll report it to his superiors who will probably send a group to investigate. AI runs on sensory cues so you'll have to be very careful. They'll see you, hear you, and even smell you (although that will primarily be the guard dogs' duty).

While some may be disappointed that they can't shoot everything that moves, those that like stealth and adventure games are sure to see some appeal in the ideas behind this game. Maybe gamers will find that they can still have fun even without weapons. **– Dan Adams** ■

Details ::

Publisher ::	Codemasters
Developer ::	Wide Games
Genre ::	Adventure
# of Players ::	1
Release Date ::	June 2002

PC :: Preview

HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN

Presumably there wouldn't even have been a sequel if he hadn't been so silent.

Not too long ago we had the pleasure of sitting down with Thor Frølich, Ninja Extraordinaire at Io Interactive. In addition to his regular ninja duties, Thor (which, let's face it, fits a viking better than a ninja) is working on *Hitman 2: Silent Assassin*. The updated engine and simplified interface are evidence that being a PlayStation port isn't necessarily a bad thing.

In the interim between the end of the first game and the beginning of the next, Hitman has had a crisis of conscience. He's been living in seclusion in a Sicilian monastery for a few years now. He helps out in the garden in return for the gracious intercession of the local padre who's trying to smooth things over between the Hitman and the G-man. But just when he thinks he's out.... A Russian mob boss wants the Hitman to perform a few jobs and decides to kidnap the padre and use him as leverage. That's when the game starts in earnest as the previously reformed Hitman gets reacquainted with his old trade

Io has maintained most of the themes from the previous game but is opening up the flexibility of the game model. Your mark still has to be dead by the end of the level but the ways to carry this out are much more varied with an increased focus on the subtle approach. In one level you've got to kill a prominent Japanese businessman. Unable to locate him on your own, you infiltrate a restaurant dressed as a chef. There you'll have to serve up a little blowfish to the mark's son. Once he's ingested the poison (and the homing device) you're just a short funeral away from figuring out where the dad is.

The disguises have been reworked as well. No longer can you merely don a sundress and infiltrate the local PTA.

And your big, bald white head is a dead giveaway at the League of Samoan Voters meeting. This time around, if your face is visible, you had better not get too close to the bad guys. And to see just when they're likely to realize something's not right and snap, there'll be a little tension bar for each of the guards. When it fills up, you file out.

Weapon management has been changed also. Now you'll be earning weapons rather than buying them. You'll have a locker where you can select weapons before a mission. On missions where you have to travel through metal detectors your agency will place weapons around the levels for you to retrieve. A new original score (recorded by the Budapest Symphonic Orchestra no less) will add plenty of atmosphere to the snowy Japanese estate, the high-tech Malaysian office building, the cluttered Indian streets and all the other locations you'll visit as a world-class Hitman.

Oh, and you can save your game now. Sweet.

-- Steve Butts ∎

Details ::

Publisher ::	Eidos
Developer ::	Io Interactive
Genre ::	Action
# of Players ::	1
Release Date ::	Spring 2002

PC :: Preview
COSSACKS: ART OF WAR

Even more gaming goodness from the eighteenth century to yours.

Up until about a decade ago, the historical strategy game was a hot property. Well, hottish, at least. But with the advent of *Dune*, *C&C* and *Warcraft* the strategy genre took a step away from real-world settings. Titles like *Age of Empires*, *Europa Universalis* and *Empire Earth* offer us a chance to refight the great battles of history trading in our lasers and orcs for harquebusiers and ballistas. The upcoming expansion for GSC's *Cossacks* broadens the experience even further.

Five new campaigns embiggen the enjoyment of the previous game with 30 new missions. Campaigns set in the 17th and 18th centuries give you a chance to direct the destinies of Poland, Austria and Saxony. An Algerian campaign lets you take on piracy in the Mediterranean. Most excitingly, the Prussian campaign lets you refight the wars of Frederick the Great.

Six new historical battles have been also added and represent conflicts in the Crimean War, the Great Northern War and others. Those of you with a Dutch fixation will prefer to play through the two battles of the Dutch Revolution, Mook and Newport. The Battles of Dunbar and Marston Moor let you take charge of the fate of England during the Civil War while the Battle of Hohenfriedberg simulates one of the fights during the Austrian War of Succession. Finally, the Battle of Rimnik of the Russo-Turkish War closes out the set.

Players of the expansion will be able to make use of some new units as well. The Bavarian musketeer and Prussian hussar are just two examples. Your military units will also be able to guard and patrol this time around, greatly easing your micromanagement burden. A forced attack option lets your cannons wreak havoc all over the map, while the new grouping features let you create massive armies.

There are also a whole batch of new ships in the game -- from the Venetian galleass to the *Victory*. The galleass is an oar-driven battleship that's plenty big enough to start taking the milk money away from all the other ships. But the real bully of the oceans is Admiral Nelson's flagship, the *Victory*. This late 18th century ship is armed with 100 cannons and is the most expensive of the six new ships in the game.

A new set of multiplayer and single player skirmish options let you configure many more details this time around. You can set up the size of engagements, the amount of infrastructure and defenses you already posses as well as a special "peace time" mode that prohibits players from going on the offensive for a specified period of time. A virtual camera records the games and lets you have a chance to review your performance (and your enemy's) afterwards.

Who knows? Maybe after a few months you might even start to get better. **– Steve Butts** ∎

Details ::

Publisher ::	CDV
Developer ::	GSC Game World
Genre ::	Strategy
# of Players ::	16
Release Date ::	Q1 2002

entertainment :: *index*
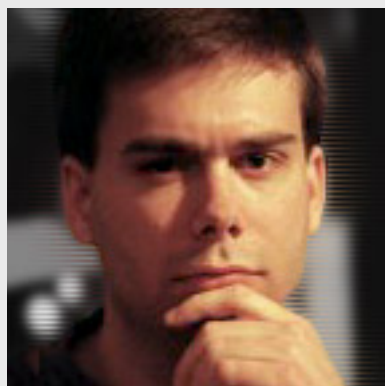
Brian Zoromski (FilmForce)

This Month in Entertainment ::

Ah, the end of the year is upon us, and for a film geek like myself it's a great time for movies. The last month of the year is when all the studios release most of the films that they feel are worthy of Oscar consideration for a couple of reasons – one is that to qualify for the Academy Awards, a film must be released in L.A. before midnight of Dec. 31; the other reason is that they want their best work to be fresh in the minds of the Academy voters, and unless it's a runaway commercial success like *Titanic* or *Gladiator*, releasing a film in the final month is a good way of making sure voters remember it. This December we'll also see the first installment of one of the most anticipated book-to-film adaptations of all time: *The Fellowship of the Ring*. It'll be interesting to see if the filmmakers can successfully bring to life J.R.R. Tolkien's richly defined Middle-earth and all its inhabitants.

Coming soon...
http://entertainment.ign.com

Holiday **GEAR GUIDE**

Need something for that special gearhead in your life? Look no further.

Feature ::

Also In This Issue ::

Black Hawk Down
Leave no man behind.

Moulin Rouge
December 18th marks the release of one of the best DVDs of 2001.

Editor's Most Wanted ::
1 :: Ali
2 :: The Royal Tenenbaums
3 :: Run, Ronnie, Run: A Mr. Show Movie
4 :: Adaptation
5 :: Spider-Man

Office Abuse ::
Rumor has it that Zoro occasionally leaves his home, but for only two reasons: to get food, and to go to his local movie theater.

Holiday GEAR GUIDE

Need something for that special gearhead in your life? Look no further.

I doubt I really have to help any of you assemble a holiday list. Odds are that you've had one worked out and edited for months. However, in the world of electronics turnover is fast, especially this time of year, when companies are scrambling to release *just one more thing* in time for the consumer frenzy. Plus, I assume there are few slackers out there who still haven't figured out what they want for Christmas, Hanukah, Kwanzaa, or whatever it is that you'll soon be celebrating.

This little guide is also for those of you with the true holiday sprit - the givers. Getting the gearhead in your life something special can be a trying task. Most of us already spend our dough on our addiction, so there's often not a lot we really need. With hope this will help you in your quest to surprise your special someone.

Happy shopping and have a rock-ass holiday.

REMOTE CONTROL TONY HAWK
PRICE :: $65.00

Tyco timed this one perfectly. The Tony Hawk Pro Skater franchise, which is up to number three for those of you who've been living in caves, is an extremely hot property, not to mention my favorite videogame series ever. And remote control products are perennial favorites.

The RC Tony can go forward and backward, left and right, of course. However, instead of simply turning, Tony actually leans in order to turn, as a real skater would. The upper half of his body pivots at the waist. Not only does this let you balance while in motion, but it will also right the unit should it tip over. (It tips less frequently than you'd think, given how top heavy the contraption is.)

The control is a cross between a standard RC unit and a videogame controller. Two trigger buttons regulate the waist pivot.

While the RC Tony is not nearly as fun as real skating, and not even as fun as the videogames, in my opinion, it is

a lot more entertaining than I thought it would be. And for the money it's a great holiday choice.

Remote Control Tony Hawk

Rio Volt SP90 ▶

RIO VOLT SP90
PRICE :: $100.00

Rio has a solid and well-deserved reputation among MP3 manufacturers. They have been making high-quality portables since the early days of MP3 and they've done a great job of embracing new formats. The company's Volt line includes three MP3 CD players; the SP90 is their entry-level model.

The SP90 plays back MP3 or WMA files from CD-Rs and CD-RWs. You simply burn your digital files onto blank discs and then pop them into the SP90. This makes for up to 20 hours of music (encoded at 64kbps, which, in the case ▶▶

entertainment :: *gear*

GEAR GUIDE
Holiday

of WMA, many people swear by) on one CD. Even if you go for the standard 128kpbs MP3 format, which I recommend, that means eleven hours on one disc - very convenient.

In addition to the basic digital playback, the SP90 reads ID3 tags (which contain track information), has 120-second anti-skip protection, has a backlit LCD, and can be operated remotely, so long as you spring for the option in-line clicker. And, of course, it also plays plain old audio CDs.

LOGITECH Z-560 SPEAKER SYSTEM
PRICE :: $200.00

It's funny - so often you see someone gaming on a dope PC with a great video card and everything and then you see that they're running sound through some tiny-ass Labtecs. A good set of multimedia speaker will make your computer much more enjoyable. A set like the 560s and you won't want to leave it.

The Z series speakers marked Logitech's entry into the high-level desktop speaker market. And they came in with quite a splash: three models ranging from $50.00 to $200.00. Klipsch, Altec Lansing, and Monsoon were already making high-end multimedia systems, so Logitech had their work cut. In order to ensure that they'd get a piece of the pie, they priced their rigs *extremely* competitively.

The 560s are the flagship models and offer more than any 4.1 system on the market. (Yes, you'll have to look elsewhere for a 5.1 desktop system.) Not only do these speakers pack plenty of power (400 WPC RMS), but they also have the grace and finesse to accurately represent everything from Dave Brubeck to QIII. And there is absolutely nothing else available for $200.00 that can touch these Logitechs..

PANASONIC SJ-MR220
PRICE :: $275.00

How could neglect the cult of minidisc users? It might not have the following that MP3 does, and it might not have the attention of the mainstream press, as MP3 did after

Logitech Z-560 Speaker System

Panasonic SJ-MR220 ▶

Napster, but MD is a solid medium. Not to mention that to many ears it sounds superior to MP3.

The Panasonic SJ-MR220 is one of the trio of top-end players on the market now. (The rest of this trio includes the Sharp MD-MT770 and the Sony MZ-R909.) The only problem might be finding one. The 220 is a Japanese model, which means that you'll need to go through an importer, such as IGN.com's favorite, Minidisco.com.

The 220 boasts just about every feature you could ask for, except NetMD, which won't be on the streets until early 2002. It can record and playback MDLP discs, has plenty of anti-skip protection, comes with a backlit remote, and sounds stunning.

A bit of snooping will reveal that Sharp and Sony's players are much more expensive than this Panasonic. At $275.00, there is no reason *not* to buy one of these for your MD buddy. ▶▶

Holiday GEAR GUIDE

APPLE iPod
PRICE :: $400.00

How could any holiday guide this year skip Apple's new MP3 jukebox? I got mine the day it was announced - thank goodness for this job - and have been obsessed with it since then.

As the ubiquitous ads declare, the iPod can hold up to 1000 songs, thanks to its 5GB hard drive. The only things you need to use it are a Mac (no PC support, folks!) and iTunes 2. You simply connect the iPod and it automatically syncs with iTunes 2, downloading all of the music on you hard drive. The iPod simply updates itself during subsequent connections. Thanks to the blazing FireWire interface, these transfers are incredibly fast, about one half-second per four-minute song.

In their trademark style, Apple designed the iPod to be very, very easy to use. The front of the unit is covered by five well-placed buttons and one dial, which you use to navigate the menu system and adjust volume. Two minutes with the iPod and you'll be a master.

If the price seems a bit high, consider that you can also use the iPod as a generic FireWire hard drive. Suddenly, you also have a highly portable drive that you can bring from one Mac to another.

I cannot imagine a Mac owner that wouldn't flip for one of these bad boys. And don't worry about them not being an MP3 fan yet. They will be after they get an iPod.

◀ **Apple iPod**

Samsung I300 ▶

SAMSUNG I300
PRICE :: $500.00

I just got my I300 yesterday and immediately knew that I'd have to write an addendum to this story. I've had high hopes since the I300 was announced, but this new PDA/cell phone hybrid still surprised me, not to mention that it quickly became the object of desire in the IGN office.

The concept is simple: combine a cell phone and a PDA. I mean, when you're on your cell phone you want your contacts and when you're browsing your contacts you want your cell phone. The trick is that Samsung designed the I300 very carefully, striking a perfect balance between the size of cellie and the power of a PDA.
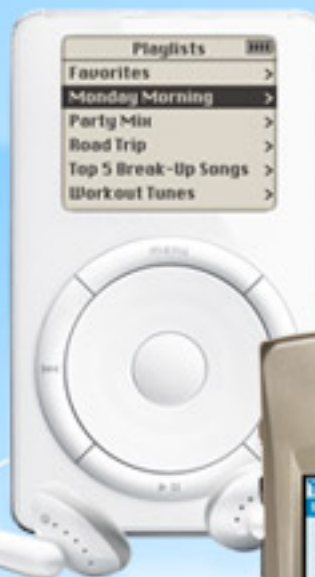
The I300 runs the time-proven Palm OS, has a backlit, color LCD touchscreen, is web-enabled, and has just about every bell and whistle you could want. And the mix of the power of a PDA database and the immediacy of a cell phone is superb.

I know that $500.00 is a good bit of dough, but if you or someone you know needs a cell phone and PDA, then this is the device to get. No doubt.

– Mike Wiley ■

entertainment :: *movies*

FilmForce Movie :: Preview
BLACK HAWK DOWN ::
Leave no man behind.

Black Hawk Down is director Ridley Scott's (*Gladiator*) adaptation of the true story of the Battle of Mogadishu, as told in Mark Bowden's novel of the same name. The film takes place in 1993 when the U.S. is sending Special Forces into Somalia to destabilize the government and to bring food and humanitarian aid to the starving population. Using Black Hawk helicopters to lower the soldiers onto the ground, an unexpected attack by Somali forces brings two of the helicopters down immediately. From there, the U.S. soldiers must struggle to regain their balance while attempting to rescue down comrades and enduring heavy gunfire.

If you've read the novel, or any account of the Mogadishu battle, you will know that the story is one of the most riveting, tragic and inspiring war stories of our generation. Ridley Scott is a talented director, and with a cast like this at his command this film should be excellent. Here's hoping the movie will be a fitting tribute to the 18 U.S. soldiers who died in Mogadishu and not your typical over-the-top, Bruckheimer-produced popcorn flick.
– Brian Linder ■

Movie Info ::

Genre :: Drama/Action/War

Rating :: R

Release :: 12/28 Limited, 1/18 Wide

Starring :: Josh Hartnett, Tom Sizemore, Ewan McGregor, Eric Bana

Director :: Ridley Scott

FilmForce Movie :: Preview
THE SHIPPING NEWS ::
You'll never guess what you'll find inside...

From E. Annie Proulx's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel and director Lasse Halström comes *The Shipping News*, the story of one man's extraordinary journey to self-discovery. After the disappearance of his estranged wife (Cate Blanchett), Quoyle's (Kevin Spacey) fortunes begin to change when his long lost aunt (Judi Dench) convinces him and his daughters to move to their ancestral home in Newfoundland. Now in a place where life is as rough as the weather and secrets are as vast as the ocean, he lands a job as a reporter for a local paper. During the course of his new career he begins to discover some dark family mysteries and finds friendship and love with a single mother who has a secret of her own.

They might as well go ahead and give this one the Oscar! Halström is an Academy favorite whose previous credits include *Chocolat*, *The Cider House Rules*, and *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*. And nothing spells little golden guy like a cast with Kevin Spacey, Judi Dench, Cate Blanchett and Julianne Moore. *– Brian Linder* ■

Movie Info ::

Genre :: Drama

Rating :: R

Release :: 12/25 Limited, 1/4 Wide

Starring :: Kevin Spacey, Judi Dench, Cate Blanchett, Julianne Moore

Director :: Lasse Halström

entertainment :: *dvd*

DVD :: Preview
MOULIN ROUGE ::

Baz Luhrmann's lavish musical didn't do as well in the box office as it should, but now it is arriving on a huge two-disc DVD set that basically speaks for itself:

DISC ONE ::
- **Dolby Digital 5.1 and DTS 5.1 soundtracks.**
- **1.85:1 anamorphic widescreen video.**
- **Two audio commentary tracks featuring Baz Luhrmann, Catherine Martin, Don McAlpine, and Craig Pierce**
- **Extensive branching footage.**
- **An exclusive "Behind The Red Velvet Curtain" version, featuring a little green fairy that leads the viewer behind-the-scenes.**

DISC TWO ::
- **Multiple featurettes: "The Writers Gallery," "Creating The Intro To The Film," "The Actor's Gallery" (featuring actor interviews), "Dance Gallery" (Uncut choreography sequences), "Editorial Gallery," (Extended scenes), "Music Gallery," (Scoring of the film and an interview with Fat Boy Slim), and "Animating The Green Fairy," and more.**
- **The HBO "First Look" special.**
- **Multiple extended scenes.**
- **Several multi-angle choreography scenes.**
- **"Come What May" and "Lady Marmalade" music videos.**
- **MTV Movie Awards live performance of "Lady Marmalade".**
- **Two theatrical trailers.**
- **Still Gallery.**

DVD Info ::

Price :: $29.98

Release :: December 18, 2001

DVD :: Preview
MAD MAX : SPECIAL EDITION ::

One of the biggest cult classic films in history is finally getting the DVD treatment that it deserves, thanks to MGM. In addition to having a newly restored 2.35:1 anamorphic widescreen transfer to make the film look better than ever, the DVD will feature the original Aussie soundtrack remastered in Dolby Digital 5.1. That means that you'll never have to hear that horrible dubbed version of the film again.

DISC FEATURES ::

- **Audio Commentary With Jon Dowding, David Eggby, Chris Murray & Tim Ridge**
- **Original Australian language track in Dolby Digital 5.1!**
- **Original Dubbed audio in mono.**
- **"Mel Gibson: The Birth Of A Star" Documentary**
- **"Mad Max: The Film Phenomenon" Documentary**
- **Theatrical Trailers**
- **"Road Rants" Trivia & Fun Fact Track**
- **Photo Gallery**
- **TV Spots**

DVD Info ::

Price :: $19.98

Release :: January 1, 2002

codes / guides :: index

Chris "El Sexo" Carle

This Month in Codes ::

It's nearly Christmas time again, and soon I'll be making my yearly pilgrimage to the mall to tell Santa my wishes. Just like the other kids, I'll wait my turn in line, calmly sucking on a candy cane. I'll hold on tight to mommy's hand while I wait. Then I'll climb on his lap, this obese stranger wearing a red velvet suit. I'll whisper to Santa while his elves take our picture. This is what I'll say:

"Thank you, Santa. Thank you for bringing me such wonderful toys early. Thank you for my PlayStation 2, and my GameCube, and my Xbox. Thank you for all of the good games. Metal Gear Solid 2 and Dead or Alive 3 and Amped and Rogue Leader. Thank you for Half-Life. I've already played a lot of them, and I've made up a list of codes to help other kids get the most out of their games. Thanks a lot for bringing Tony Hawk 2X early, too, Santa. I've played it a lot and even had a chance to write down how to beat all the new levels.

Now here's what I want for Christmas. World peace, of course. That goes without saying. And I'd like an end to fanboyism. It gets so tired. Oh, and could you possibly get the Packers to win the Super Bowl? That would be nice. You're the best, Santa. Thanks for everything."

For more codes, guides, hookers & more, visit **http://codes.ign.com.**

Featured Guide ::

054 :: Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2x
A guide to the Xbox's own THPS!

Dead or Alive 3 (Xbox)
Unlock characters, costumes and even different haristyles!

Metal Gear Solid 2 (PS2)
How to get various game items, make yourself stronger and even play in "Extreme Mode".

Editor's Most Wanted ::

1 :: Lord of the Rings: FotR (Movie)

2 :: Animal Forest (GCN)

3 :: GUNVALKYRIE (Xbox)

4 :: Bully (DVD)

5 :: Stealing Beauty (DVD)

Office Abuse ::
Chris used to be the lead singer in a band called "Chowderhead."

Amped: Freestyle Snowboarding (Xbox)

Unlock Raven
To unlock Raven from the original Xbox demo, enter the code "RidinwRaven" at the Cheat Menu.

Dead or Alive 3 (Xbox)

Unlocking Costumes
Almost every character has an alternate color to one of their costumes and a few have a hidden costume. Here they are:

Kasumi: Kasumi has different hairstyles depending on what button you press at the character select screen. For her normal ponytail press A, for a braided ponytail press X, and for her hair to be unbound, press Y. To unlock Kasumi's hidden costume, complete all the exercises with all the normal characters in Sparring Mode.

Hayabusa: While selecting Costume 2, press X for the White "Shadowstorm" version of Hayabusa's ninja outfit.

Hitomi: While selecting Costume 1, press X. Hitomi will take off her jacket to reveal her tanktop.

Zack: To get Zack's hidden costume, get 20 wins in survival mode with Zack.

Brad Wong: While selecting Costume 2, press X for a reddish version of his outfit.

Tina: While selecting Costume 1, press X to see Tina where a green top and leopard print pants.

Bass: While selecting Costume 2, press X for a shirtless Bass.

Leon: While selecting Costume 1, press X for a shirtless, bandolier wearing Leon.

Bayman: While selecting Costume 1, press X for a blue beret, non-vest wearing Bayman

Jann Lee: While selecting Costume 1, press X to see Jann Lee wearing black pants and yellow shoes. Also, while selecting Costume 2, press X for a yellow version of this kung fu outfit.

Lei Fang: Lei Fang has three different versions of her Costume 1. For a white version press Y, for a blue version press X, and for a black version hold the L Trigger and press X, Y, or A.

Christie: While selecting Costume 2, press X for a purple version of Christie's suit.

Helena: While selecting Costume 2, press X for a black version of Helena's dress.

Hayate: While selecting Costume 2, press X for a green version of Hayate's ninja outfit.

Ayane: While selecting Costume 2, press X for a white version of Ayane's dress.

Ein: To get Ein's hidden costume, finish Time Attack with Ein in under six minutes.

Unlocking Ein and Random Select
To unlock Ein from Dead Or Alive 2, finish Story Mode with every character. When the final credits roll, go into Survival Mode with Hayate and play so you can put your name in the rankings. While at the ranking screen, enter EIN. You will unlock Ein playable in every mode except Story Mode, and you'll also unlock a Random Character Select feature.

Fuzion Frenzy (Xbox)

Unlock First Person Mode
To unlock First Person Mode, pause the game and hold the Left Trigger. Then press Y, B, Y, B.

Unlock Mutant Mode
To unlock Mutant Mode (which is really Big Head Mode), pause the game and hold the Left Trigger. Then press Y, B, X, X.

Unlock Squeky Voices
To unlock Squeaky Voice, pause the game and hold Left Trigger. Then press Y, X, Y, Y.

Fuzion Frenzy (Xbox) cont.

Unlock Welsh Mode
To unlock Welsh Mode, pause the game and hold the Left Trigger. Then press Y, Y, Y, Y.

Half-Life (PS2)

Invincibility
Go to the Cheat Code screen in the Options menu and enter the following cheat to unlock Invincibility: LEFT, SQUARE, UP, TRIANGLE, RIGHT, CIRCLE, DOWN, X. Press START to confirm code. If done correctly, the code will appear in the box to the right.

Unlimited Ammo
Go to the Cheat Code screen in the Options menu and enter the following cheat to unlock Unlimited Ammunition: DOWN, X, LEFT, CIRCLE, DOWN, X, LEFT, CIRCLE. Press START to confirm code. If done correctly, the code will appear in the box to the right.

Unlock Alien Mode
Go to the Cheat Code screen in the Options menu and enter the following cheat to unlock Alien Mode: UP, TRIANGLE, UP, TRIANGLE, UP, TRIANGLE, UP, TRIANGLE. Press START to confirm code. If done correctly, the code will appear in the box to the right.

Unlock Invisibility
Go to the Cheat Code screen in the Options menu and enter the following cheat to unlock Invisibility: LEFT, SQUARE, RIGHT, CIRCLE, LEFT, SQUARE, RIGHT, CIRCLE. Press START to confirm code. If done correctly, the code will appear in the box to the right.

Unlock Slow Motion Mode
Go to the Cheat Code screen in the Options menu and enter the following cheat to unlock Slow Motion Mode: RIGHT, SQUARE, UP, TRIANGLE, RIGHT, SQUARE, UP, TRIANGLE. Press START to confirm code. If done correctly, the code will appear in the box to the right.

Unlock Xen Gravity
Go to the Cheat Code screen in the Options menu and enter the following cheat to unlock Xen Gravity: UP, TRIANGLE, DOWN, X, UP, TRIANGLE, DOWN, X. Press START to confirm code. If done correctly, the code will appear in the box to the right.

Madden NFL 2002 (GCN)

Thanksgiving Easter Egg
Sure, it's weird to get an Easter Egg on Thanksgiving, but that's just what we've got. If you play Madden NFL 2002 and your GameCube clock is set to Thanksgiving day, Madden and Summerall will refer to it in their commentary. Grab a turducken and enjoy!

Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty (PS2)

Bathroom Problems
When you're listening to the conversation between Ocelot and Solidus with your Directional Mic, press left to point the mic at the bathroom. You'll be able to listen to a very humorous scene where some guy is having problems on the toilet.

Daze the Guards
Even the stealthy sometimes get caught. When this happens, a blue exclamation point will appear above the guard's head. If you shoot the blue punctuation mark, you'll knock the guard out temporarily.

Extreme Mode
After you beat the game once, you'll unlock the Extreme difficulty level.

Get Digital Camera
After you beat the game, you can play the game over with the same save and you'll have the Digital Camera in your inventory for both the Plant and Tanker episodes. You can use this to take pictures and save them onto your memory card.

Get the Wig
First play through both the Tanker and Plant episodes and get every dog tag. Then start a new game and save. You will then have a wig in your inventory that gives you infinite ammo and allows you to not have to reload.

Getting Dog Tags
Most of the normal guards in the game have Dog Tags that contain the names of the game's development team and those that won Konami's contest. To collect the Dog Tags you must hold up the guard and then make him shake and give it up by pointing your gun at his head or crotch. Dog Tags can be collected for each of the game's four difficulty levels.

Make Yourself Stronger
Anytime you find yourself hanging from a bar or edge, you can press the R2 and L2 buttons to make the character do a pull-up. After you do 100 of them, your grip strength will be raised one level.

Skip Codec Text
You can quickly skip through all the Codec voices and text by pressing the triangle button twice. The first will stop the voice and text and the second press will cause the rest of it to scroll through quickly.

Special Message From Otacon
If you take pictures of all the girl posters, and the two locker doors that have a guy and girl on them next to each other, and upload them to Otacon instead of the photos of the Metal Gear Ray, you'll get some hilarious responses from him.

Waking up Soldiers
If you need to get a Dog Tag from a knocked out guard, just spray coolant on his face to wake him up and then try to hold him up.

Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty (PS2) cont.

Zoom-in on Cut Scenes
Press the R1 button to zoom in on the real-time polygonal cut scenes. When holding the button down, you can move the camera around slightly with the right analog stick.

Star Wars Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader (GCN)

30 Points, All Secret Missions
Secret missions can be bought with the points you've earned from getting medals. There are three missions available for purchase. They can be found placed above Death Star Attack, Battle of Hoth, and Strike at the Core missions. Each mission costs 30 points. But why waste your hard-earned points when you can save them by pulling out the memory card before you buy. This way you'll always have at least 30 points. However, you will not be able to save your progress on these levels, but it does give you a chance to play them.

Black and White Mode
To play in black and white, enter the Password "LIONHEAD." Get it, Lionhead made the game "Black and White?" Get it?

Unlock Ace Mode
Get a Gold Medal in every mission, plus complete all of the Training missions and you'll unlock the super-difficult Ace Mode.

Unlock Audio Commentary
Obtain at least a bronze medal on all 10 main missions. You can access this in the Special Features section under options.

Unlock Documentary
Finish all main 10 missions. You can access this in the Special Features section under options.

Unlock Millennium Falcon
To unlock Han's ride, get Bronze Medals on all 10 original missions.

Unlock Naboo Starfighter
Complete Tatooine Training in all four time settings. You can set your GameCube clock manually by holding down the A-button upon powering up. Choose morning (06:00), afternoon (14:00), evening (18:00), and night (23:00). You must complete all objects, find all discovery items, as well as the two hidden bonus items in each zone.

Unlock Slave 1
To unlock Slave 1, Boba Fett's ship, get 10 Silver Medals in the original missions.

Unlock Tie Fighter
To unlock the TIE Fighter, beat the Imperial Academy Heist mission during both day and night. The ship will be available in a remote region of the hangar the next time you return.

XBOX

CAREER GUIDE

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2X

Intro

Xbox owners rejoice! Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2X combines two of the best skateboarding games of all time on one disc. So what does the X stand for? Extraordinary. Excellent. Extra levels. In addition to all of the Tony Hawk 1 and 2 levels, there are five new areas to explore: three Career Levels and two Free Skate areas that can only be unlocked by completing the Career. To help you do just that, we've crafted a short guide to help you get the most out of the new levels in 2X… and you won't even skin your knee.

Club, London

The Club in London is a skateboarder's paradise. It has similar elements to the Tokyo level in Tony Hawk 3: neon rails, tons of weird ramps and plenty of interesting lines. The club is split into two parts, to the left and right of the starting point.

To the left is a bowl paradise. If you're mainly a vert skater, you can get a lot done in this room. Lots of bowls and lots of edges makes for a lot of grind-manual-air combinations. Get up on the rails that bisect the room for even more fun.

To the right of the starting point is the disco room. This is where most of the fun happens in the Club. Two disco floors (a la Michael Jackson's Billy Jean video) light up as you skate over them. Use these long, shallow areas to function as ▶

▶▶ **CLUB: LONDON**

▶▶ **CONSTRUCTION SITE: DALLAS, TX**

▶▶ **SKATE PARK: TAMPA, FL**

CLUB: LONDON

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SKATE PARK: TAMPA, FL

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2X

elongated half pipes to help you launch up to a curved walkway or, on the other side of the room, the DJ Booth. Under the walkway is a long, curvy bar that street skaters will dig. Above, on the walkway, you'll be able to get inside a boomin' speaker room (to the right) or a futuristic, sculptured atrium with a pool of water at the center. Use the ramps in the atrium to get up on the rails that run across the room.

Whatever you do, keep bustin'.

Collect 5 Digits

1. From the starting point, head through the doors to the left into the lower room. You'll see the first set of Digits hanging above an abutment that juts out into this complex bowl. Drop into the bowl and head toward the graffiti, pushing forward to jump over the lip and rail, grabbing the Digits.

2. There is another set of Digits behind a row of speakers at the far end of the room. Head up to the higher level and skate up the ramps at either end of the speaker riser. Simply skate into the Digits.

3. Move to the disco room, to the right of the starting point. You'll find the third set of Digits on the curved bar in the far left corner of the room.

4. Use the right disco floor to get some speed, then leap up to the curved walkway to the right. Once you land, turn right and head up the small ramp here. Then use the half pipe ahead to vault up to the higher walkway. You'll find the fourth set of Digits here.

5. Leap back down to the curved green ledge below. Follow it up into an atrium with a pool of water and sculpture at its center. At the back of this room, hanging above the metallic ramp, you'll find the last set of Digits.

Collect S-K-A-T-E

S: From the starting point, take a right into the disco room. At the end of the right dance floor, you'll find the S floating above. Use the quarter lip to launch up into it.

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K: Pop out of the dance floor and grind the right bar to get the K.

A: To get the A, you'll have to grind up the long, curved neon rails that lead up to the DJ booth. Gain some speed on the ramps on either side of the room, then head toward the neon spine. If you have enough speed, you'll zip right up the neon. At the top, hop to a grand on the DJ booth to grab the A.

T: To get the T, move to the other room, to the left of the starting point. Move to the right side of the room. The T is floating near a rail on the right wall. From the second tier of the stairway ramp, Boneless up to a grind on the rail on the right wall. Follow the grind toward the T, and when you get close, leap into it.

E: To get the E, launch off of one of the wooden quarters that sit beneath the triple rail that is suspended across

the room. Line up a jump to the center rail and grind through the E.

Find the Secret Tape

To get the Secret Tape, head to the disco room. Use the small quarter pipes at each end of the right dance floor (when looking from the door) to gain speed. When you're going fast enough, leap up on to the curved ledge on the right side of the room (opposite the DJ booth). This leads to a high walkway. Once you get up there, turn right and smash through the plate glass. This will take you to a room packed with speakers... you can even feel the boom. There are several neon rectangular neon tracks suspended from the ceiling as well. On either side of the room is a progression of narrow half pipes. Use them to work your way to the highest level in the room. Then leap to a grind on the highest neon rectangle, grabbing the Secret Tape as you cruise around.

Construction Site: Dallas, TX

Wanna grind a two-by-four? The Construction Site is the place for you. This down-and-dirty building site is stuffed with rocky quarter pipes, grindable tractor trailers and a massive building-in-progress that can be "climbed" using a rag-tag assortment of plywood ramps.

CLUB: LONDON

CONSTRUCTION SITE: DALLAS, TX

SKATE PARK: TAMPA, FL

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2x

The outer ring of the Site is fun, with lots of transitions from seesaws to trucks to keep you busy, but the best part of the level is the roughed-up four-story skyscraper. Grind the high iron and make your way to the top of the world. Then, if you're feeling bold, leap off the top of the building and try to transition to the tiny ramps below.

Grind 5 Seesaws

1. From the starting point, do a 180 and head to the right. You'll see the first seesaw in the distance, in front of a wooden pyramid box. Grind it.

2. Continue forward from the first seesaw past the pyramid. Stashed behind the semi trailers here is the second seesaw. Shred it.

3. Continue forward, keeping the truck trailer to your right. When you emerge on the other side, wait until you see a partial wall of cinder blocks. Drop into the hollow below to find the third seesaw.

4. You'll be facing the large unfinished building. Skate forward, then take a right. Directly in your path, you'll find the fourth seesaw. You know what to do.

5. Head toward the two bulldozers in the distance. Just past them you'll find the fifth seesaw.

Collect S-K-A-T-E

S: You'll see the S from the starting point. Drop into the construction area below and vault off of the bulldozer

blade to grab it.

K: Head up on of the ramps that lead into the unfinished building. You're going to need to do some climbing. The K is hanging above a wooden quarter board that you'll need to use to get up to the next level. Launch off of it and drift to the right to transfer to the level above, snagging the K in the process.

A: When you land on the next level, head forward and use the propped wooden ramp to Boneless up to the slightly higher grated metal ahead. Follow the floor to the right and vault off of another plywood ramp to grab the A. Land on a grind on the bar above.

T: Leap off of the grind onto flat ground on the higher level. The T is hanging above a wooden quarter pipe here. Gain some speed and move toward it, then launch up and get it. However, don't try to transition to the higher level from here.

E: Instead, head back across the platform and use the quarter pipe in front of the frosted glass to sky up and over to the ramp above. When you land up top, you'll see the E hanging in a half pipe ahead. Jump diagonally across the missing floor to get to its platform and move inside the half pipe. Then pop up and get the E.

Find the Secret Tape

Make your way up the building under construction, using the same progression of ramps you went up to get A-T-E. The Secret Tape is suspended high in the air between two quarter pipes (on the opposite side of the roof from where you found the E). Get some speed up going back and forth on these ramps, then launch across the gap to catch the tape.

Skate Park: Tampa, FL

The Skate Park in Tampa boasts two distinct areas, the indoors and the outdoors. Inside, there are a couple of railed funboxes and a bleacher area that leads to a half pipe, which will feed the need for the grind-aholics out there. This open warehouse is stuffed with plenty of vert as well. Masonite quarter pipes buttress every wall, and there is a massive half pipe stashed in the corner. If you're an adept vert skater, you can shred this alone for enough points to win.
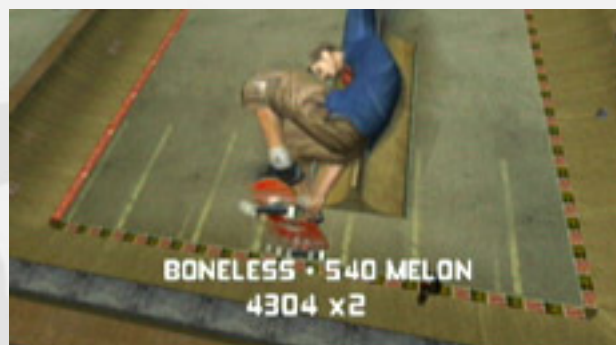

If you ride the quarter pipe next to the half pipe, you can launch up to a grind on the rafters overhead. This will give a birds' eye view of the interior, and allow for sick combos when you drop to a grind or manual below.

On the exterior, the fun continues. There are tons of ramps out here with miles of coping. You know what that means. Grind until you can't grind anymore, then hop off, manual and carry the manual up and off of a nearby ramp for mega point potential. Or, you can grind or air between ramps to get transfer gap bonuses.

There is a full loop back here as well. Use the low quarter wall to launch into a grind along the edge of the building, then drop into the roll-in to gain enough speed to loop-de-loop. The loop isn't worth many points, but you can tell your friends you've done it.
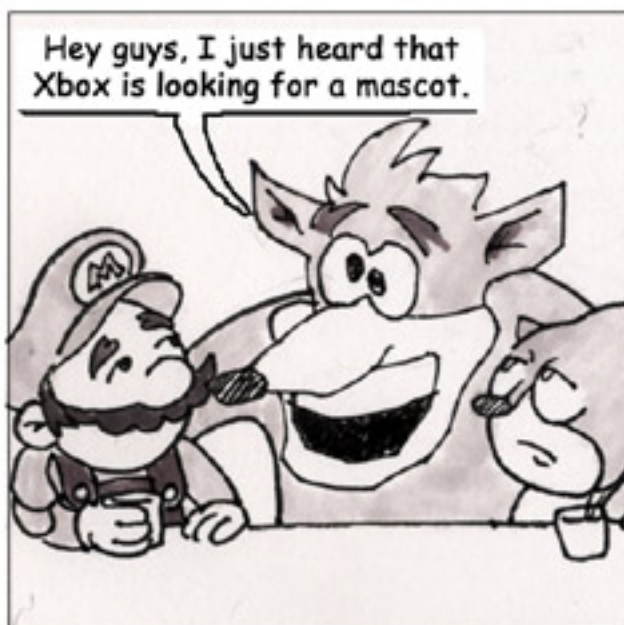

Do the Work, Get the Pay

When you get a Medal in the Tampa Park, the THPS1 Career will be unlocked. Go forth and skate, young man!

When you 100% the THPS2X Career Goals, you will unlock the high flying Skyline level in Detroit, MI. Get up there and reap your lofty rewards!

– IGNguides ■

IGN.comic Returns! ::

A lot of you have been asking recently why the IGN.comic has disappeared from the pages of IGNinsider. Well, besides the fact that Steve is a lazy bastage who doesn't come into work until 2:30 and usually leaves by 4:45 with an hour lunch somewhere in between, thereby giving him very little time to draw up a regular strip, we decided to move the IGN.comic to its new home on the last page of IGN Unplugged starting with this issue.

Until next time, have a happy holiday and don't wear your fingers out on too much gaming over the holiday break!